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LIZETTE

L I Z E T T E E

A Story of the
Latin Quarter

By EDWARD MARSHALL

With Illustrations by
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AND
J. C. FIREMAN



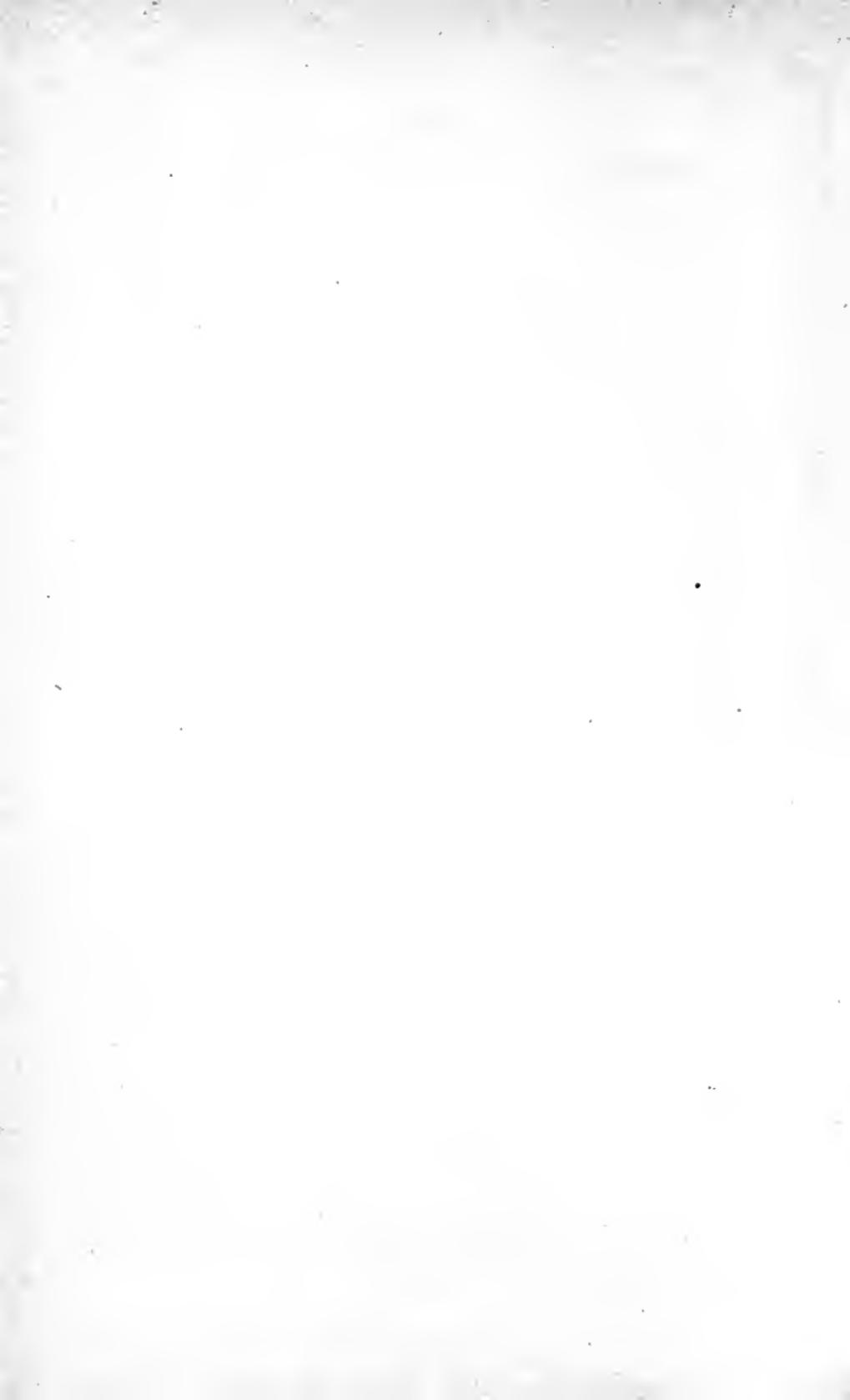
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Affectionately dedicated
to my two sisters



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LIZETTE

CHAPTER I.

FATHER AND SON.

It is good to have a father who is rich, better to have a father who is wise, and best of all to have a father who is both—which was John Murdoch's happy fortune. The son had just come home from college, newly graduated. The father looked at him with curiosity. They had been good friends—this father and this son—but now there was reserve between them. The young man's life must now begin in earnest, and both paused and felt embarrassed as they faced the problem. The father wanted to ask many questions about future plans—but hesitated. The son had made his plans, but looked for scornful smiles—and also hesitated.

Business hours had ended at the bank. John sat in the visitors' chair, across the desk from his father's larger one of carved mahogany. His father was president of the bank—a serious matter—and the chair in which he sat partook in its appearance of the dignity of the position. The whole room was solemn: carpet, woodwork, everything about it. So also were the men.

The old man smoked, leaned far back in his chair, which tipped, and gazed with musing eyes across the desk; three things he never would have done in business hours.

"Well, John," he said at last, "now that you have finished college, what do you intend to do with your summer?"

He had wanted to say "life," but he had compromised on "summer."

The son, whose face combined the solemn, practical

features of the father with the softer, more artistic face of the dead mother, sat silent for a moment, as if gathering strength to meet expected opposition. When he finally spoke he did not meet his father's eyes.

"I have planned to go abroad," he said, slowly.

His father nodded with approval.

"Well, my son," he said, "I don't see why you shouldn't. It ought to be a good thing for you. I had thought, before you came, of speaking of it to you. I should like to have you see the world. I never did. We might as well arrange it now. How much money do you want? How long do you want to stay? When do you want to go?"

John Murdoch's father, it will be seen, was prompt. He wasted neither words nor time in talking. The son was also terse in his reply.

"I shall need a moderate allowance. I want to go at once and I have planned to stay four years."

The old man looked at him in blank amazement, although surprise was rarely shown in the banking house of John Murdoch by master or by man, being contrary to the ethics of the business. Then he said calmly, with his eyes fixed steadily on his son's, which were downcast:

"Humph! If there is wisdom in your plan, of course it will be right for you to go. If you've gone mad you will attract less notice there than here. I offer no objection. You are not a child. Name a reasonable figure for your allowance and that will be arranged. I am astonished. Four years! It is a long vacation!"

The son spoke:

"I ought to have two thousand dollars yearly to begin on. I may need more. I cannot tell with any accuracy what it will cost to live in Paris. I shall not waste money. I shall not have time. I am going there to study art. I am not lazy, sir, and have not planned for a 'vacation.'"

There had never been a hint of this before between them. The old man sat silent for a moment. He turned his glance away from his son's face and moved one hand along the polished side of his big chair. When he spoke there was a look still more foreign to the banking business in his eyes. That his son should want to study art

was most amazing. But if he wanted to, why shouldn't he? He, himself, had gone into the banking business because his inclination led him to it. He thought of the characteristics of this boy's mother's nature. It pleased him, in a negative way, to find this strong touch of her temperament in their son. It was strange that his own purely practical, business nature should not have dominated in their child; but he had truly loved the mother and he truly loved the son. There was an incongruity about the thing, though—like cashing checks by giving marble statues for them at the bank.

"That's very curious," he said at last. "I am astonished, but perhaps you're not as crazy as you sound. I guess it's what your mother gave you. You never got such notions out of me. But if it came from her, it's all right—surely. So—if you want to—study art, my son, why—study art. I don't suppose that it will hurt you any, and I am certain that it won't hurt me so very much. It will upset the plans that I had made about the bank; but human plans are often overturned. But if you study art, my son, there's one thing I want clearly understood—you've got to be a damned good artist. If you've got *that* in you, go ahead. If it's not there, don't be an ass and waste your time. Have you thought the matter over carefully?"

"Yes, sir," said John Murdoch, flushing slightly. "I have thought the matter over and decided. I am glad of your approval."

"I haven't said," the old man interrupted, "that you had *that*."

"I should be sorry not to have it," said John Murdoch, slowly, "but it would not change my plans. I shall be a damned good artist, though; I promise that, sir."

The old man smiled a little. The young man's statement that his course had with finality been set, and would not be altered to meet the views of any one, roused his admiration. He even chuckled audibly.

"All right, my son, I'll fix the money. You keep that 'damned' in mind," he said.

"I shall, sir," said John Murdoch.

CHAPTER II.

THE CAFÉ DOMPERILLE.

John Murdoch, when he arrived in Paris, did not number among his accomplishments the ability to speak French. He did not, so far as he knew, number among his acquaintances a single person in the city. And he did number among his discomforts a feeling of great loneliness. He bore with him, from professors in his college, letters of introduction and commendation to certain art instructors; but he did not present them. He was an independent young tub by nature, and he preferred to stand on his own bottom. He had not been in any foreign country before, and his keen, young, American eyes were closely and critically observant.

In this first day he learned much of French human nature. He became hardened to the look of blank, cow-eyed amazement, which is generally accompanied by a cold glitter of cruel mirth, when a Frenchman finds that some one ignorant of French is trying to talk to him. He struggled to fill his empty stomach before eleven o'clock, but was unable to get a breakfast heartier than rolls and coffee. He tried to board both a street car and an omnibus, only to be pushed away, while the conductors murmured a French word which he did not understand, but which meant "full." He was regarded with amused contempt by one cakman because he paid him more than his fare, and villified and abused by another because he paid him exactly the legal rate, but did not give him the customary tip of two and one-half cents. He was disappointed by the Seine, which he found to be a narrow, muddy stream. The small French soldiers, with their half-way short trousers, elaborately baggy about the hips,

did not look to him like fighting men, and he sarcastically called to mind Artemus Ward's then recent explanation of this brevity of their nether garments. With high contempt of the French military's somewhat unsoldierlike appearance, Ward said, in writing home from Paris, that he had with great interest investigated this affair. He had found, he said, that the maidenly appearance of the trousers was due to lack of funds. It had been the original intention, he had learned, to have a row of tatting about the bottom of each trouser leg in all the great French army. But the appropriation had run out. Murdoch appreciated this as he gazed at them. The little soldiers did look much like puppets, and their pantaloons like pantalottes of awkward cut and uncouth color. It seemed absurd to Murdoch that policemen should carry swords instead of clubs. He thought that the women who passed his place of observation were garishly and the men badly dressed. In short, John Murdoch did not like his first glimpse of Paris.

Many men do not.

All women do.

By and by, in order that he might find the place of art and artists, he asked the interpreter at the hotel how he might reach the Latin Quarter. The interpreter, he mused, as the man in uniform jabbered at him, had probably been selected for his place in a French hotel frequented by Americans because he could only speak Icelandic. He certainly could not speak English, and Murdoch had grave doubts about his French. Finally, however, he learned through him that it was unwise to waste time in the Quarter before eleven o'clock at night—a statement wholly false, which it is still the custom among the hotel folk of Paris to tell to Americans. There were hours of weary waiting before him. He spent some of them in watching a play and wondering stupidly what was being said upon the stage. As he was getting into a cab after the theatrical performance had mercifully ended, he saw a man whom he had met on the ship coming over. He was named Fitzpatrick, and he was the buyer for a wholesale hat house in New York. Murdoch had not been

particularly impressed by him on the ship, but now he hailed his distinctly New York English with great joy. Fitzpatrick was full of fun and wholly in his element. He jabbered something, which Murdoch presumed was French, to the driver, for the man seemed to understand it and showed that he regarded the speaker with real respect. Murdoch had begun to think that Paris cabmen had respect for no one. They drove to the *Café de la Paix*, where they drank beer in mugs and coffee in glasses. Murdoch poured his indignation against the whole French race into Fitzpatrick's amused ears.

"Pshaw," said Fitzpatrick. "The Frenchies are all right. Wait till you get used to 'em. You'll only think they're funny then. You won't waste time in hatin' 'em. And there's a lot o' joy in gay Paree after you begin to learn the ropes. You'd never find a place like this *café*, for instance, in New York. Some man will start one, some day, and get rich out of it. We think we're rapid over there, but really we're slow in some things. Wait a minute. If you'll give me time to jump into the hotel and get a Frenchman I'm trying to do some business with, we'll all go over to the Quarter. If it's a good night it'll tickle you to death. If it ain't, it'll make you long for home and mother."

By half-past eleven the three were at the *Café Domperille*, on the Boulevard St. Michel. The young Frenchman, who was Fitzpatrick's guest, gabbled on the way about the places they were passing, and Fitzpatrick threw free translations of what he said into Murdoch's interested ears. They clattered over the bridge, stopped for a moment before the great fountain at the head of the Boulevard, and then, after the driver had madly whipped his horse, as the Parisian *cocher* always does unless one is in a hurry or driving by the hour, dashed up in front of their selected destination.

The *Café Domperille* (which is not its real name) is a low-browed establishment, fronting on two streets. It was then the most popular all-night resort for the students of the Latin Quarter, their girl companions and the hundreds of hangers on about the art settlement of Paris. It

still enjoys a large prosperity, although it has lost some of its old prestige. It has two or three rows of tables on the sidewalk, and, within doors, benches covered with cheap red plush run around the room, while the remaining floor space is crowded by chairs and tables. There is always a certain kind of merriment in progress at the Domperille between the hours of eight p.m. and three a.m. Sometimes it consists of nothing more serious than eating, drinking and singing, with more drinking than either of the other two. Sometimes it is made up of enthusiastic fights between students or between jealous grisettes. Sometimes, on more serious occasions, its core is a riot, in which the students combat with the police. Several students have been killed there in one way or another, and an accurately directed earthen match-safe, sped by the powerful arm of an English student, neatly cracked the skull of an obstreperous gendarme within its very walls, not many years ago. The students and the police are natural and sworn enemies, and the students calmly left the officer to writhe and die upon the sidewalk while they built barricades of overturned omnibuses and street cars and tore up the paving stones to use as ammunition in the fighting of the gendarme's fellows. Nowadays, the cars passing the Domperille are enormous steam double-deckers, which could not be upset without an hydraulic jack, and the pavement is made of asphalt, which could only be prepared for use as ammunition with pickaxes to tear it up with. Thus was a troublesome spot made comparatively peaceful by the clever French police.

There was little that was exciting this night, however, at the Café Domperille. The Frenchman pointed out to Fitzpatrick and Fitzpatrick pointed out to Murdoch some of the most interesting and well-known characters in the crowd at the tables, both inside and out. There were men there beyond middle life, but "students" still, whose straight-brimmed pot-hats appeared older than themselves and whose clothes were shabby beyond easy description. There were boys there, roystering, who had scarcely passed their teens. Every eccentric costume which the inventive mind of youths, whose pride it was to look unusual, could

device was worn by the men and so much regarded as the regular thing that the strange garments only attracted notice from the two Americans. One or two of the students nodded to the Frenchman, and one of them knew Fitzpatrick. Fitzpatrick, by the time he saw and recognized this student, had reached the mellow stage where he begged Murdoch to call him "Fitz." He beckoned to the student whom he knew.

"Come here, Kentucky," he shouted at him across the tables.

"Kentucky" took beer.

While he drank it, Fitzpatrick, with a movement which was almost reverential, lifted the student's pot-hat from his head.

"Murdoch," he said, as he passed the hat across the table, "handle this as carefully as you would the ashes of your grandmother. It's a work of art, my boy, and Kentuck's only claim to the title 'artist.' "

Kentucky ordered another beer and drank it slowly and without a smile. He did not shrink from the recital of his story, so long as the reciter paid the café checks.

"Kentucky," Fitzpatrick gossiped on, "came here with the idea that he was to be a second Michael Angelo or Rubens. Didn't you, Kentucky?"

"The trouble is," said Kentucky, contemplatively, "that people do not know good pictures when they see them, and that the hanging committees are jealous of really good work. I am more than forty years old now, and have been away from the State after which my intimate companions invariably call me, more than half of my life. And, would you believe it, gentlemen, those idiotic jurors have never hung one single picture of mine in the Salon! Of course, because of this, not one of them has been purchased for the Luxembourg."

"It's jealousy, Kentucky," said Fitzpatrick, gravely. "That's what it is. It keeps many a good man down. But here, Murdoch, look into the hat."

It had once been covered by long, fleecy nap; but this had worn away until the skin showed through it as the hide of a mangy dog shows through his fur. It was a

couple of inches taller than the silk hat of to-day, and was a trifle smaller at the top than it was where it joined the brim. The brim was wide and projected absolutely straight around the bottom of the hat. As Murdoch picked it up it felt top-heavy. He looked inside and found a delicate network of slender pieces of wood which held the hat in shape. I have that hat in my possession now, and when I look into it, it reminds me of the iron beams and girders which I have seen as I have looked up into the Eiffel tower. Each little stick held out a certain section of its skin, and the joinery work was quite as perfect as that of the most accomplished cabinet-maker.

"How long have you had that hat?" inquired Fitzpatrick.

"More than twenty years," said the student, solemnly. "For as long a time as that, pure envy of my real art has prevented me from buying a new hat. But I have done all that I could to make this one last."

Murdoch, wondering, handed the hat back to him, and said that the latter statement seemed to him to be quite true.

Kentucky took another beer and passed out into the night, the Frenchman going also a few moments later.

Sitting on a bench not far away were half a dozen girls, who had eyed Kentucky enviously while he had enjoyed the hospitality of the hat buyer. They were dressed with the gaudy good taste of French women and, because they were French, knew how to wear their clothes in a manner which made cambric seem like silk. There was an appearance of gay elegance about them and an air of great prosperity. This was strangely belied when they, with much argument and searching, succeeded in combination in making up a purse of twelve sous for the purchase of cœrvisse, a small shellfish somewhat similar to shrimps. This was the supper for the six. Presently two of them, without introduction or parley, pulled their chairs into the space made vacant by Kentucky. Murdoch, of course, could not tell what they were saying to Fitzpatrick, but the latter seemed to be much pleased by their attention, and they went away neither hungry nor athirst.

By this time Fitzpatrick's natural geniality of temperament and a strange mixture of French intoxicants had exhilarated him to the point where he called Murdoch "Murdy."

Finally he rose, stretched, looked at his watch, remarked that it was one o'clock, that he had an appointment to play billiards at the Grand Hotel at one-fifteen, which he could scarcely make, and must go.

"Do you want to come along, Murdy," he said, somewhat thickly, "or do you want to stay awhile? It gets livelier later. I'd stay if I were you."

Murdoch stayed. Within ten minutes he was sorry. All that night life, which had been so interesting to him while the genial hat buyer had been there to explain it, became unintelligible again, and his loneliness increased. Young fellows at the tables, some of them obviously rich and some as obviously poor, were all happy. No one paid the least attention to him, except, occasionally, some thirsty girl, who unhesitatingly asked him to buy a beer for her. Everything seemed unreal and unnatural. The fellows were not the kind of chaps whom he had known in college. The girls, curiously, seemed neither brazen nor modest. There was a certain apparent innocence even about their evident viciousness. If one of them raised her skirts and danced upon a table, she did it, not wickedly, but because she felt the need of some easy way of showing to her friends that she was merry. High kicking had an unusual charm in its complete unconsciousness of impropriety. Such exhibitions were merely trials of skill and limberness. They attracted small attention. Not a person there was tipsy. The French dilute their drinks and do not habitually get drunk.

Sitting in the bright glare of the gas lamps on the sidewalk was a young fellow, evidently an East Indian. He was carefully dressed and apparently had plenty of money. His companion was a pretty girl of about twenty, who seemed to be extremely proud of him. Other girls, as they passed, threw out little jokes at her, which were answered with defiant nods and shakes of her pretty head; but her elation changed to watchful gravity when another girl,

slightly disheveled, pushed through the crowd to her and said, in a voice tremulous from anger, something which Murdoch knew must mean, "I want to see you—you—you—you!"

The girl, after whispering to her companion, rose from the table with a forced smile, and went away with the woman who had called to her. Murdoch turned again to watch the others at the tables on the sidewalk. They were all enjoying life after their own fashion and he thought that it was a strange fashion. Suddenly a girl jumped up and cried:

"Oh, la la! Louise! Louise!"

There was a rush to the side street. Murdoch joined it just in time to be one of a hundred spectators who involuntarily formed a ring around the two women who had left the table a moment before. They were half standing, half crouching, with blazing eyes and flying hair, eying each other like enraged animals. In a second they were at it and fighting hard. They followed no rules, observed no scheme of rounds and breathing spells; but simply fought with fists and finger nails, with feet and teeth. The ring around the combatants was made up mostly of men. Murdoch saw with surprise that many of them bore upon their shoulders women, who were anxious to see the fight and had climbed up to get a better view than was possible in the surging crowd upon the ground. While he was watching this strange night spectacle in his first astonishment a pair of feminine arms clasped him about the neck and a soft voice murmured "Pardon, M'sieu." In a few seconds more Murdoch was, himself, the enforced vantage point from which a girl of the Latin Quarter watched the struggle.

When it had ended, the girl slipped lightly to the ground and politely thanked him. As he went over to his table again she followed him as if it were a matter of course—as if their introduction had been quite sufficient. When he sat down, she sat down also. Then, for the first time, he saw her face plainly. It was a pretty little face. She was not more than eighteen or nineteen years of age. She was more plainly dressed than any other in the café

and, somehow or other, seemed to him to be better form than any of the rest. There was a refinement and a pleasing delicacy about her which was indescribable. There were no lines of dissipation in her face, nor was there any rouge on it. She had the air of doing the only thing there was to do. It did not seem bold for her to come and sit by him, which surprised him. He reflected that it must be the way in which she did it. Almost in a moment she discovered that he was an American, and there was something infinitely pretty in the way she smiled, nodded her well shaped head and said:

"Vous eete un Americain?"

There was a query in her voice, and Murdoch understood exactly what she said, as anybody would have.

"Yes," he said, "I am an American."

"Yais," she said, "*Un Americain.* I spik Engleese one leetle—oneairy leetle."

Murdoch was delighted, but had he known how really little that "vairy leetle" was, his joy would have been tempered. If it had not been for the bright fascination of her animated face and the sweet naïveté of her efforts to make him understand her, he would have relapsed into dull lonesomeness again, and regarded her as another of the unnatural persons who formed the unreal crowd around him. But there was the delicately charming fascination. He sat and watched her across the small, round table for another hour while she drank black coffee and ate ecrivisse and small sweet cakes. He watched her eyes, which were especially refined and vivacious; he watched the pretty curves of her delicate lips while she tried to form them so as to copy the strange sounds of his English words; he watched the flashing dimples in her rosy cheeks as she laughed merrily at his absurd attempts to imitate her own quick French. The sleepy waiter put some of the lights out. The outside tables were taken in. Almost everyone had gone when he reluctantly arose.

"Vair ees eet zat you go? Yais, vair ees eet?" she asked.

"I go home," said Murdoch, yielding to that absurd inclination to speak "broken English," which we all have when talking to a foreigner.

She answered daintily, with a movement of calm and satisfied contentment, impossible to describe. She linked her arm in his and said sweetly, in a way that finally settled the matter:

"Yais? I go, too."

And this was the beginning of John Murdoch's life in Paris.

CHAPTER III.

A DUCKING IN THE SEINE.

He found a studio and two large rooms, overlooking the charming old Gardens of the Luxembourg. John Murdoch will never forget the green of those swaying trees in the Gardens of the Luxembourg, nor the twittering of the birds in them, nor the faint uprising shouts of the children at play there when the sun shone, nor the high comfort of feeling himself in his own home, when the rain came down upon them or the fog rose upward from them. He used to sit at a window on stormy days and thank his good luck that the sun did not always shine out of doors. It always shone indoors, and Lizette—dainty, bewitching, devoted—was the sun.

Six mornings of the week at five o'clock, she gently shook him and bade him dress for work. On a little table in the studio were his coffee and his rolls, waiting for him. He no longer yearned for the American breakfast. He ate what she gave him hastily, while she chattered gaily, unless she stopped and pretended to pucker up her forehead in a great scowl, because he ate so rapidly.

"Of a certainty it is," she would say, "that some day you will choke until you die. Be not af-raid. The rolls are of the good ones. They will not taste so ver' ter-ree-ble, if you eat them with the slowness. You are like *les p'tites oiseaux* over in the trees in the Gardens of the Luxembourg. When their leetle *maman* takes to them the worm—the g-r-e-a-t b-e-e-g wo-r-r-r-m—*les p'tites oiseaux* eat it so much in the haste that there can be no happiness at all for the poor *maman oiseau*. She mus' sit upon the nest's outside, an' wonder if *les p'tites oiseaux* will die of it. An' so it is wiz you. You devour the roll

an' coffee with such great haste that I sit by an' have the worry in the heart of me, for fear that I shall soon be all alone because you will go dead of it. Go dead of it!"

And, having delivered herself of the tale of this great worry, Lizette would flit about busily on the affairs of his first breakfast, stopping now and then to watch him eat, so that she might be sure that he was obeying her and not tempting the fate which she predicted for the small birds in the nests across the way. She was most delightful at those early morning breakfasts, as she attended to him and worried over him. John Murdoch will never forget that little figure in its patten slippers and its loose wrapper of rich red. Lizette always wore gowns of this rich red within doors. She made most merry about her long black hair. It so often came down in the mornings—that black hair! Sometimes as she stood behind him, watching to see that he did not do as the greedy little birds did, it would come down and fall around his shoulders. It was never taken away by hands alone. It always needed both her arms to gather it again. Such hugs those were that Lizette gave him when her hair came down!

In the early days of their life together she had one cause for worry of which she did not speak, for the fear was in her heart that he might feel resentment if she did. She had heard great tales of the hazing which students were sometimes put through at the schools. Always in the past she had heard these stories with small laughs of keen amusement, for she had not cared about the men who suffered the mild tortures devised for *nouveaux* by the older students. But now she lived in fear that Murdoch would meet some such indignity. There was a tale told in the Quarter of a student who had been driven mad by masked fellows from the Beaux Arts, who went to his studio at night and nearly killed him physically in divers ways, and added to their sin by working so upon his emotions in the guise of evil spirits that he was taken away from Paris by friends and placed in an asylum.

But time passed and, although Murdoch told her of other fellows who had been dealt with by the merry-makers with some roughness, he was not molested and

her heart's load was lightened. Shortly afterward, an episode brought her complete relief from worry on this score. They had walked, slowly, after dinner, away out the Boulevard, until they had actually reached the place where grass grows and all the surface of the earth is not blocked by buildings. It was a surprise to her. She had never been out that way before, and she enjoyed every moment among the green and pleasant things they found there. She was so merry in the gathering dusk that, as they were passing through a field, she ran ahead a little and made a tiny leap across a narrow runway. Her ankle turned beneath her on the other side and she sank to the ground with a small cry, and really in great pain. Murdoch, all tenderness, picked her up, after he had found that her ankle was sprained, and carried her a full mile, partly through the fields and partly through the sparsely settled outlying streets, until he found a cab which would take them to a surgeon's. There was such solidity in the arms that held her, such untiring ability to stride along under a heavy burden in the man who carried her, that she was greatly impressed by it, and in a moment of freedom from pain, or else while she was bravely forcing back complaining exclamations, she remarked triumphantly that if they attempted to haze *him*—her strong one—they would find trouble and not pleasure for themselves. She did not fear the hazing after that. Murdoch, too, who had expected it and who had made up his mind to take it, when it came, as good naturally as possible, began to feel that what was so long delayed was unlikely to come at all, and forgot about the matter.

His life fell into a routine of hard work. No other student in the Quarter toiled more faithfully or more intelligently. While daylight lasted he worked with ever increasing skill with his brushes and his canvas. When night came it was Lizette's great happiness to curl herself on a rug beside him and read the American stories which he had taught her how to understand, even as she had worked at teaching him to speak good French, while he toiled steadily with charcoal and with black and white oils. Only when he was at his classes were they separated.

But one night he did not return to the studio at the usual hour. There was in the class with Murdoch a young Frenchman whose unpopularity was great. He was a tall, thin person, with deep-set eyes and thin lips, which were pressed into a tight straight line whenever the master criticised his work, or when any of the other students attempted to make merry with him. It was known in the school that he had started to study for the priesthood, but had been dismissed from the institution in which he was studying because of his ungovernable temper. The Paris art student is not noted above other human animals for his reverence, and the classmates of the young man called him by a name which indicated him as a backslider. He did not like it, but there were so many of the offenders that he made what pretense he could of taking it good-naturedly. The pretense was unsuccessful, many times, which perhaps egged the other students on. He had practically no friends. This isolation among the other students angered him. There was really no design or concerted action in it. He had brought it on himself by his bitterness of tongue and poor concealment of an outrageous temper. But it made him hate the men who could make friends. and Murdoch, in a way, was popular.

There is gossip among art students, as there is gossip wherever human beings are gathered into groups, and the gossip about this student was that he was supported and his school expenses paid by an old woman who sold coals in the Quarter, and who had a small shop just off the Boulevard. The student said he "boarded" with her and even spoke of her with great contempt, but the gossip went that she supported him and paid his way, and that there were certain reasons for her doing so, not altogether unconnected with maternal feelings. The old woman who sold coals was popular among the students (she freely extended credit), and all spoke of her as "Madame," although no one knew Monsieur. There was a tradition in the Quarter that once she had been very beautiful and shapely, and that then she had not sold coals, but had posed for the schools and afterwards exclusively for a certain artist, who had since then gone to England to win

fame and fortune, leaving the model to make her way as best she could without his help or his protection, but with a child who had given up the priesthood for the rocky road of art. When they were seen together in the shop, the old woman always treated the student, who said he was her lodger, with the greatest deference and respect as it was befitting that she should treat her only "boarder," but sometimes she had bruises on her face, which to her customers indicated beatings. Once after she had been seen in her shop with an especially scarred and unwholesome looking visage, the student appeared at the school with a hand well bandaged. The word passed round that the old woman who sold coals had for once given to her son some measure of return for his abuse. This belief among the students that the ex-theolog had struck a woman had not added to his popularity.

All this leads up to the explanation of John Murdoch's tardiness in his arrival at the studio where Lizette was waiting for him that night of which I have spoken. He had stopped in at the shop of the old woman who sold coals, to speak to her about the supply at the studio, and happened to reach there just as the young student, who did such honor to her by lodging in the room over her shop, was taking the privilege, a strange one for a lodger, of demanding money from her. The two were in the room back of the shop, but the door was open, and while Murdoch could not see them, he could hear them plainly.

The crisis came when he heard the old woman tell the student that she had no money and beg him not to strike her, a plea which was followed by the sound of blows and of a fall. The old woman did not cry out, but continued to plead for mercy piteously in a muffled voice. Murdoch thought that the indistinctness of her tones might be caused by fingers on her throat, and so he entered. He saw at once that he had been wrong in thinking that the student was choking the old woman. Her indistinctness of speech had not come from that. It was caused by blood and some loosened teeth within her mouth, for the student had struck her brutally.

Murdoch did not strike him. He merely grasped him

with a wrestler's tackle which he knew and bore him out of the back door of the shop to the side street. Then, adjusting the astonished student so that he could be carried with complete ease on his brawny back, Murdoch hurried through the dusk with him to the river. An inclined roadway runs from the level of the street there, down to some baths which are anchored to the river's bank, and down this Murdoch sped, with the raging, but powerless student on his back. There were a number of gamins in their wake by the time they reached this interesting spot, and, in the distance, Murdoch could hear the labored protests of the old woman, who ran stumbling after them, breathing so hard and with her mouth so full of blood and loosened teeth that she could scarcely make articulate sound. He was well out on the planks by the time she came up with him and had ducked the student once, with great solemnity and in complete silence on his own part, but amid much sputtering from the helpless student and many shrill cries of delight and approval from the gamins. She begged him to let the student go, and tried to say that she had given him great provocation and that he was not at all at fault. The student himself was swearing with what breath his short stay under water and his great efforts to loosen Murdoch's iron hold had left in him, and was vowing incoherent vengeance.

Murdoch slowly and with system ducked him again. This time, when he came up, sputtering, he stopped swearing at Murdoch and begged to be released. But at the same time he vowed vengeance on the old woman who had been the cause of it all. This failed to satisfy the strong one from America. Murdoch explained to the dripping victim that striking women was considered the worst sort of manners in his native land, and added that threats against the sex were also impolite. Then he thrust the student under water once again. The man showed the weakening effects of this treatment when Murdoch yanked him out. His words came with great difficulty and they were conciliatory words. Murdoch suggested to him that he might avoid further immersion in the waters of the Seine by apologizing to the old woman,

and promising that he would not offend again. To this proposal he demurred. Then Murdoch called upon old Father Seine to help him in his argument again, and when he pulled the student out upon the planks he was quite limp and subdued.

In the presence of the admiring and interested gamins and amid the protesting sobs of the old woman, who seemed most anxious that no further punishment should be inflicted on her lodger, the latter chokingly admitted that he had done her wrong and now regretted it. Murdoch thought that perhaps the apology might be more effective if it were delivered while the student knelt. The student rebelled at this humiliation and was ducked again. This time Murdoch held him under until, when he was hauled limply out, he could not stand without the strong support of Murdoch's hand which grasped his collar. When Murdoch released his hold the student sank to his knees quite as much from weakness as from humility and, while Murdoch stood over him ready and resolved to further immerse him if he did not obey orders, poured out an apology of sickening humiliation amidst the plaudits of the gamins and the old woman's choking sobs.

Just as Murdoch turned away, feeling certain that the student would not further assault the old woman who sold coals, for that night at least (there was a reason in his evident exhaustion from the struggle as well as in the promise which Murdoch forced from him to sin no more), a gamin, running up, handed a little dagger to him, and told him that it had been dropped during the progress to the Seine. Another called attention to the fact that blood was oozing from his trouser leg. Then Murdoch discovered what had been the cause of a sharp sting which he had felt in his hip while he was bearing the student Seine-ward. The man had had a knife and had cut him slightly in the hip, but dropped the weapon in his excitement, before he had had further chance to use it. With this discovery he turned and went back to the cringing student, who whimpered as he went to him and would have run away if there had been strength enough for running in his legs, and ducked him once again.

"That, my dear child," Murdoch explained as he brought the thoroughly subdued student, limp and sputtering from the water, "is for using knives. It is a silly practice. Don't do it any more. Especially, don't do it to Americans."

Then he went his way and left the old woman and the student there upon the planks together. The old woman was exhausted by the varying emotions which quarreled in her breast, among which admiration for the young American strove with horror at the fact that the one she idolized had been the victim of his strength.

On the way home to the studio, Murdoch stopped and had the small wound bandaged. He decided that he would not tell Lizette about the encounter, but it had left such marks of pallor and dishevelment upon him that he had to tell her something of it, and, although he tried to make the telling funny, and did not mention to her who his victim was, her face was white and strained when he had finished, and she went to him and put her arms around his neck and trembled with a woman's fear of dangers that are passed, while she rejoiced again in the glory of his strength.

CHAPTER IV.

AN ARTISTIC HAZING.

Although John Murdoch never spoke of the incident to any student, the news of it was noised abroad. It had two effects. In the first place it added greatly to the unpopularity of the immersed one, and his life became even more isolated and uncomfortable than it had been before, which is saying much. In the second place, it made John Murdoch a much respected man, and it started great tales about his muscle. Some of these he heard and they amused him. They were wildly exaggerated and included vivid details of feats which might have put Sampson to the blush. This probably had much to do with the mild form which his hazing took, when at last it came. An overwhelming number of his fellow students seized him one early morning before the masters came and bound him tightly to a chair back. Then they removed his shoes and placed his bare feet so that the bottoms of them were near enough to the great stove in the atelier to make him wonder just when they would begin to burn.

A meeting was held, to whose deliberations he must listen quietly, which had for its object a discussion of what other things should be done to him by his fellows. Wild and uncanny were the plans suggested. Blood curdling proceedings were talked over in his hearing with studied gravity. It was finally decided that his feet should be well roasted first. Then the plans were that he should be stripped and painted red. He came, the spokesman argued, from the land where Indians flourished tomahawks and scalped helpless ones. Therefore he was an Indian, and for him to go about Paris not garbed as one was for him to travel under false pretenses.

In the execution of the plan Murdoch was not stripped, but his face and neck and hands were most terrifyingly striped and made hideous with red paint. In his hair were tied the feathers from a duster, and then about his prostrate form the others danced in glee, with strange imitations of the famous war-whoop, and dabbing him in spots with long mawl sticks freshly dipped in paint. The young student whom Murdoch had doused so effectively in the waters of the Seine was present, and his small, keen eyes sparkled with malicious glee when the fun first started. He evidently hoped that Murdoch would resist and that it would end in his being roughly handled, as very often happened when students made too strong resistance to the will of the majority. While the fun was at its highest and the dancing and the yelling were most demoniacal, this student worked around until he got in the rear of Murdoch, where the prostrate one could not see him.

Then, with a smile in which the eagerness of cowardly hatred was too thinly masked to be obscured from the others, he slyly made a move as if to kick the top of Murdoch's head. This called down on him the disgusted wrath of the whole room and he went shamefacedly away. It also stopped the fun for a few moments, but youth forgets quickly, and the others soon renewed the mild torture of Murdoch with paint and mawl sticks. Finally he was forced (with proper hesitation on his part) to take an oath that if he was released he would purchase divers drinks and delicacies for the entire class when the day's work should be finished, and he was also required to promise that he would make no effort to remove his decorations until he reached his home that night.

To these things Murdoch agreed after keeping the fun (which he enjoyed as much as anybody) going as long as its somewhat hysterical nature made agreeable to the participants. It wound up with a trial of Murdoch's strength, which satisfied and surprised the other students and made them add to the penalty he must pay for living on the earth and studying art in Paris, the further task of bearing through the streets for a prescribed distance, the fattest student in the class. In case he failed to agree to

this, other penalties were to be imposed. But he consented.

And so it was that when Murdoch returned to his studio and Lizette that night, he was most picturesquely decorated, and there sat astride his neck a student, who, if his art ability had been in ratio with his weight, would have been a very Michael Angelo. Murdoch's hat was worn over another by that member of the class who had the smallest head, and his coat had been turned inside out and, with sleeve linings of bright stripes, added to the interest of his appearance. Two students with tin horns made hideous noises at his sides, and just behind him marched an orchestra whose instruments were made of combs and tissue paper.

Lizette heard the tumult from above, and watched it from a window of the studio. She greeted Murdoch at the top of the stairs with the almost hysterical fondness of a mother hen who cuddles a small chicken which has escaped from deadly peril.

With difficulty she washed the paint—which had had hours to dry in—from his face, stopping now to hug him with congratulations that his trials had been no worse, now to burst into long trills of laughter over the extraordinary appearance which he presented.

Suddenly she stopped work entirely. Then, to Murdoch's great surprise, she hurried from the tiny kitchen, where she had been conducting her scrubbing operations, to the studio, and returned with paints and brushes. He did not understand at first, and was too much amazed to speak when she gravely began to restore, with tender touches on his face, the paint which she had just succeeded in scrubbing off.

"Hold on," said Murdoch, in amazement. "Are you going to haze me too? I had supposed that I was safe when I reached the studio and you."

"You *are—most* safe wiz me," she said. "I shall not do to you ze one sm-a-a-lly hurt. But we forget. M'sieu Kaintucky have not seen you as you were. It is not fair to heem. I mus' paint you all up wiz ze niceness once *ag-ain*, and zen go an' fetch heem to look upon ze soairy."

funny sight. To spoil all ze beauteousness of you before he see it would not of ze kindness be. One leetle, leetle moment. Zen I have you fix. Zen I go to fetch heem. Zen I wash you off some more—an' it ees ovaire. But of a certainty he mus' see you. Such is but right."

So, having painted with tender carefulness for eyes and mouth, for a time upon the docile Murdoch's face and arms, adding a few deft and disfiguring touches to his ears and nose which even the students, in their riotous ingenuity, had not thought of, she left him, all sticky with the paint, but wonderfully and wonderfully meek and quiet, and started out to get Kentucky. It was like Lizette to think of him. She liked him, and of a certainty Murdoch was most funny. The whole Quarter had had joy from him. It did not hurt him to afford this joy. Kentucky had not seen him. That was unjust and must be rectified.

Murdoch gazed after her, as she departed, with open mouth and wondering eyes. She had new surprises for him every day, and he had often thought and marvelled at her watchful care for others. But *this* development! He finally decided that it, too, was delightful. He determined also to make the old student's surprise and pleasure as complete as possible, and, incidentally, to further interest Lizette.

He quickly made a pair of trunks by cutting the legs off an ancient pair of trousers, and smeared his bare legs and arms and body with as much paint as he could get on in a hurry. His legs were hairy, and he reflected that the coloring would come off with difficulty, but that only made him lay it on the thicker. So when Kentucky and Lizette came up the stairway, they were confronted by a sight much more terrifying than the one which Lizette had, with fond thoughtfulness, decided that the ancient student should not miss. As Murdoch heard them coming up the stairs he grasped a carving knife and jumped out upon the landing with it brandished in his hand. Also he emitted yells. Also he performed strange dances. Kentucky and Lizette almost fell backward down the stairs. But when, recovered from her astonishment at this new

development, Lizette and the ancient student of the ingenious hat followed Murdoch in, she gazed critically at him and decided that he made a most impressive and delightful savage.

Finally she went to him and took his face between her hands. Having adjusted it at an angle which was completely satisfactory, she kissed him on the lips, getting a smudge of paint upon the tip of her own nose in the doing of it.

"Is it that there are many of *ze sauvages* who go like zis upon *ze streets* in New York City?" she asked of him in complete and charming innocence.

Murdoch gazed at her in mild, but growing wonder.

"Lizette," he murmured softly as he gazed, "you are to me a constant source of joy and peace. No, my child, there are few who go like this upon the Broadway of New York. Nearly all the people in the United States wear shirts and trousers when they appear in public. Indeed, I may almost say that the appearance of a man in such a garb as this, on Broadway, would be sensational."

Kentucky was convulsed by ribald laughter.

"It was," Lizette said gravely, as she went to get the cloths and soap and other things to begin anew the removal of the paint, "in *ze thought* of me, that Indians were there—in New York. I was wrong. Alas! That all of us should so often have the wrong in thoughts of other people and in thoughts of places which we know not well."

And then she cleaned him up.

CHAPTER V.

KENTUCKY.

They had few close friends except Kentucky. The man who had so ingeniously preserved his hat, Murdoch learned to know as an unfortunate of great natural ability, who had misplaced himself. It was impossible to fail to like him. The pictures on which he toiled persistently were terrifyingly bad.

Only once, and that had been long years before, had Kentucky ever sold one of his canvases, but one of his many ways of paying for his food and little room was coloring on wood the small copies of famous paintings, which were in those days (and are still, I presume) everywhere for sale in Paris for five francs apiece. They were especially used by the dealers to cheat tourists with. They were offered to them on the plea that they were the work of students in the Quarter, who did them in the schools, under the direction of the greatest masters, as practice in their study of the arts. A pattern of the painting to be copied was made on wooden slabs. It was then the artist's duty to fill this in, using as much paint as possible to hide the pattern completely, and make the slab look as though the picture had been painted with a free hand. The dealers furnished the materials, and for each one of the little pictures paid a franc and a half to the artist who had colored it.

If Kentucky really settled down to it and labored industriously for a twenty-four-hour stretch, without stopping, except for meals, he could copy as many as twenty in that time. His mechanical ability stood him in good stead in this work, for Kentucky could paint as fine and straight a line as a professional carriage striper. This work he

did, perhaps, twice a week. He locked himself into his dingy little room at daybreak, with a bottle of weak wine, some bread and cheese and the materials for his artistic effort. He did not emerge again until the following morning about ten, when he had his little pictures ready for the dealers. Those delicate lines made a ready market for him, but he had a grievance against the merchants in that they frequently demanded of him that the pictures should be dry before they were paid for. Kentucky had devised a curious light wooden box, divided into small compartments. It opened by the removal of a side. By means of this he was enabled to deliver his wares while the paint on them was fresh, and this hard-hearted mandate of the dealers who required of him that it should be quite dry before they paid was to him another evidence of the desire of mercenaries to keep genius down. He used to make speeches about the dangers of the monopolistic tendencies in France at the cafés chantants, in Montmartre, and when he reached the close of his addresses he invariably used this matter of the fresh paint upon his pictures as the final illustration by which he made his point. These points of his were always greeted by vociferous applause.

When Kentucky was not painting his little wooden pictures, or permitting some anxious soul to purchase absinthe for him, he haunted the libraries and devoured their contents with an interest that amounted to a passion. Everything was meat to him, from the reports of the Paris Bureau of Health to the manifold volumes of French romance. He had a faculty for remembering all that he read with complete accuracy, and by the time John Murdoch met him the learning acquired in this way amounted on some subjects—mostly useless to him—to erudition. He sometimes wrote advertising pamphlets, and he could correct the French of even the most careful Parisians, as to construction, although his accent was heartrending. When Blank & Co. produced their English-French and French-English dictionaries, he was employed upon the work, so that for six months he did not need to paint little pictures. He had a horror of sleeping during darkness,

and it was his great desire to miss only a very little of the daylight. Probably no human being, unless it might have been Napoleon, ever lived with less sleep than poor Kentucky.

One of his few unpleasant eccentricities was that of calling at the studios of his friends, at about the time when they were preparing to go to bed, and keeping them up all night by marvellously interesting discourses on all sorts of things, from the fall of the Roman Empire to the best method of raising mushrooms. It apparently did not occur to him that while he needed little sleep, his friends might not, also, be abnormal in this matter. And the trouble with Kentucky was, not that he insisted on staying all night, but that his hearers, after he once began to talk, insisted on it. He could weave a romance about a bit of sewer pipe in conversation, or make a poem of a paving stone. Sometimes, when he did not feel in a talkative mood, he cleverly performed most amazing tricks of sleight of hand or nosed around the studio, trying to devise some convenience which it lacked, so that he could supply it. Murdoch's studio had lamp-brackets wherever a beam could be found strong enough to nail them to. It had shelves; it had ingeniously devised board boxes which cleverly concealed household details. An especially constructed lamp globe came as near to counterfeiting sunlight as an electric light. All these were the work of Kentucky.

One bleak night in December he climbed the four flights of stairs to Murdoch's studio. Lizette and John recognized his step before it reached their outer door. John was tired after a long day's work, and Lizette was sitting by him, gently stroking his hand and gazing dreamily into a spluttering fire of caked coal-dust which burned in an old Franklin stove. That stove, which showed the bright burning of the coals so plainly to them, was much comfort to her. She loved to make pictures in the fire. Always John Murdoch was in those pictures, and always in the pictures he held her hand. She loved the old stove, despite its cracks and general unworthiness, and when Murdoch decided one day that he should buy

a new one she protested; so many beautiful visions had the glowing coals in that one shown to her. The sound of Kentucky's step that night was an interruption to very pretty dreams, and she looked up at John Murdoch with a rueful little smile and said:

"Eet ees Kaintucky."

"Great Scott!" said Murdoch, hastily. "Put the light out, sweetheart, and perhaps he won't stay long. I'm always glad to see Kentucky, but to-night we are both tired. Put the lights out."

Lizette obediently put out the lights. The last one was barely dimmed when Kentucky's well-known double rap was heard, and Murdoch opened the door to him. The fact that the studio was in darkness apparently did not impress Kentucky. He entered and sat down.

"I'm awfully sorry that we can't have a talk to-night, old chap," said the mendacious Murdoch. "You see my allowance has run out and I couldn't buy oil to-day."

This was a lie, but in the Quarter one must sometimes tell innocent lies, if one would live. And it was a good lie, for that a student should be out of oil and unable to buy more was not at all surprising.

"Who wants to talk?" demanded Kentucky. "Will you lend me a little butter?"

Murdoch heaved a sigh of tired relief. It seemed that Kentucky had not come to talk, after all. He had come to borrow butter.

Lizette gave him the butter on a small saucer. Kentucky took from his pocket an old handkerchief and deftly made a little bag of it, in which he placed the butter. He folded three of the corners under, after he had saturated the remaining one with butter by the dim light of the fire, while the others looked on in wonderment. Then he pinned the bundle up so that the fourth corner stood upright.

"Got a match?" he asked of Murdoch.

Murdoch gave Kentucky a match, and with it he lit the lamp which he had improvised. It burned somewhat smokily until almost three in the morning while he told them, amidst a most outrageous smell of blazing grease,

about coffee in India and the old legends of the Breton peasants. During all this time his eyes never once wandered toward the well-filled lamps standing in the brackets which he himself had put up.

Presently Kentucky wearied of these subjects. Then he took two English walnuts and removed the kernels. One of these he gravely ate. The other he broke in half, and putting one piece into one of the empty shells, he placed the other in the other, and held one in each hand.

"There is something remarkable about the kernels of these nuts," he said. "You will observe that God made the two halves of that broken kernel to go together and stay together for all time. But you see that I, Kentucky, Fate, Circumstance, or whatever you wish to call me, have torn the two halves of that kernel apart and placed one-half in one shell and the other in another. That was not as God intended them to be. He made both halves to go in the same shell, for all time, or for such time as that nut should exist. But they have been torn asunder.

"You will see soon that they will re-unite. It is so with human beings. Certain of them God makes to go together. I believe that he made you, Murdoch, and you, Lizette, to go together. And I believe that he will see that you are together in spite of anything that man may do. I have never seen two people so admirably mated. You are a great joy to me, my children, and I love you both. Now you see that I have one nutshell in one hand, with one-half of that separated kernel in it, and I have the other nutshell in the other hand with the other half of that separated kernel in it. They belong together. You will see that, despite my hands, despite the hands of Fate, they will get together somehow, and you—you clever ones—will not be able to tell how, any more than other clever ones would be able to tell how, if you should be separated, you would find one another and join your hands again. But see!"

Lizette was fascinated by the talk. The dim light and the gaunt figure of Kentucky, who, when he did his tricks, made himself absolutely diabolical in looks by ruffling his long hair and rolling his eyes around fiendishly, seemed

uncanny. And that matter of her separating from John Murdoch! Why should he have hit on that? That very afternoon she had sat by the fire and wondered about the days to come. Would her romance end as had so many she had known of in the Quarter? Would it end with Murdoch's passing on to worlds unknown beyond the seas, while she stayed back, to weep for him? That she could not credit, for John Murdoch was not like those of whom she thought, and she knew with sweet conceit that she was different from the women whom she thought of. But this little nut trick of Kentucky's held her just the same, after his introduction of it, as a snake's eye holds a bird.

"You will see," Kentucky droned on, in the most approved manner, "that I am cruel Circumstance, and that I have torn that tender kernel apart. In one nutshell is the one-half, and that is in this hand. In the other nutshell is the other half, and that is in *this* hand. I hold them tightly. Fate holds them tightly. Bear that in mind. But the world moves. See, I move my hands to show the movement of the world, which even Fate must bow to."

He blew solemnly upon each nutshell, and moved his arms mysteriously about. Then his hands opened and he showed the two nutshells there just as before.

"We will open them," he said, "and see if natural affinity has not put them again together in spite of Fate."

He opened one shell and it was empty. Lizette was bending over eagerly to see.

"See?" she said, prettily, "I have left my shell. Open of the other one, Kaintucky. I am no longer I. It must be that I have gone to the other shell and now am him—my Pudgy. Open the other one, Kaintucky."

"We shall see," said Kentucky, still in the manner of a conjuror, "that in spite of me, Fate, who have tried to keep you from him, you have gone to join your affinity in the other shell. I *could* not keep you from him. I, Fate, could not do it. We shall see that you have gone to join your other half."

And he opened the other shell. But there, within it, was only the single half kernel that had been there all the



MURDOCH

time. Its affinity had *not* gone to join it. Fate had failed in the playing of her game, for the fingers of Kentucky, her representative, had slipped.

"Bah!" he said, discomfited. "I must have fumbled. It is lucky for us all, my dear, that the fingers of real Fate are cleverer and surer than the fingers of Kentucky."

They looked for the half kernel which had searched for its affinity in the other shell and failed to find it. It was lying on the floor, where Fate had dropped it, and had been crushed out of all semblance to the kernel of a nut by the heavy foot of the magician.

Of course, they laughed at the mishap. It was such a very simple matter for Kentucky's fingers to have slipped! But there was a sign of strain and effort in Lizette's smile which they would have seen if the light from Kentucky's funny little lamp had been bright enough to show her face, and though she pretended to make merry over Fate's failure to put her with her Pudgy, the episode really scared and worried her in spite of the better sense which she tried to bring to bear on it.

The little lamp which Kentucky had improvised flickered and went out. He said good-night at last, although he should have said good-morning, for it was within an hour of dawn. Lizette threw her arms about Murdoch's neck and clung to him. She said nothing of the foolish pain that filled her heart—such an impressionable little heart it was!—but it really beat fast in terror over the dire failure of the two halves of the kernel to get together in their appointed shell.

"Oh, Pudgy!" she said to Murdoch, as her arms clung tight about his neck.

No one ever knew where she got that name "Pudgy" for Murdoch. But she had it and it clung to him through all his student life, and if, in after years he heard it, it always filled him with a delicious thrill—a thrill made up of all those pleasant emotions which he had learned during those ecstatic years when Lizette was with him.

"Oh, Pudgy," she said to him. "You are not going to let me drop and lie there till some one brings along the foot and steps upon me?"

There was a pathetic tenderness in the way she clung to him with those soft arms tight about his neck. He could not always understand her. No man could have always understood her.

"Why, no, sweetheart!" he said, soothingly.

She heaved a happy little sigh at this assurance and nestled her sweet face down in his bosom as a kitten might.

"I am so glad," she said.

In an instant she straightened up and looked at him with the solemnity which always meant that she intended to give orders to him.

"And now it is," she said, "and now it is that you must sleep. Poor Pudgy! He kept you up all night, and it was that you needed to go to bed. Well," and she shook her head in a very charming way, "it is that you cannot go to bed. But it is that you can lie you down for a few moments while I get your coffee for you, and it is that I can wash your face with bright cold water after you have awakened up."

And it was that these things happened.

CHAPTER VI.

SHADOWS OF THE PAST.

John Murdoch was not a genius, but he knew some things, and what he knew, he knew. That was where the father's part of him came in. Perhaps it proved to be a pity later that it did not stop there. That is as one judges. Poor Lizette! Poor little Lizette! She was beyond the pale of society, was Lizette, but no bird among all those that twittered in the Gardens of the Luxembourg was more innocent of knowledge of wrong-doing than was this same Lizette. She had found her life—John Murdoch. She lived her life as best she knew, by loving him as few are loved, by caring for him as a little mother might, by helping him in all he did as few are helped.

All her thoughts were thoughts for him; all her plans were plans for him; she lived her life for him and loved that life because he was a part of it. That he loved her there was no doubt. That she loved him—one might have banked one's soul on that, it was so certain. He was her day, he was her week, he was her year. Those four years that he was all Lizette's, what a happy little ignorant little, unmoral little French girl she was for those four years. She was so ignorant, indeed, that she did not know that she was wicked. She was so happy that at first she never dreamed that happiness could have an end. Poor Lizette!

The little episode of the trick that had failed because Kentucky's fingers had been clumsy overshadowed her all day. Almost always she was merry, was Lizette, but this day she was not. Not that she passed the day in moping; that would have been quite unlike her. But it was a quiet, thoughtful day, a day of drifting thought, as our

days are like to be when we have not slept enough at night. Her thoughts were retrospective thoughts. She was in that mood when any pleasant thing might bring a smile, but only something very funny would have made a hearty laugh. Those shells! They troubled her. She had not looked much into the future. Since she had met her Pudgy, each day had seemed so great a joy that there was no time for the anticipation of other joyous days to come.

This day her thoughts went drifting back into the dreamy past. It had not been a happy past, but there was an indefinite, uncertain little margin of bright days at its very beginning, away back, so far that her memory could only grope for it and sometimes could only grope in vain. Certainly it was very strange and very happy, that little bit—but it was afar off in the south of France, where grapes and olives grow, and where the sun shines hot and where the snow storms never come, and where a great big, bearded man had sometimes held her in his arms and talked to her in a loud, good-natured voice, and tossed her up before a painter's easel. That man, she knew, had been her father. She could not recall much about him. She remembered that the man had talked much to her while he held her in his arms, and she remembered that he had talked in English, at least at times, for now, when she was studying English so very hard, that she might please her Pudgy by her progress, she sometimes found a word which came like an echo out of the dim past.

And those words that came back to her with a strange familiarity were almost always words of endearment. She decided that the man—that great, big father, with the deep voice and the strong arms, who had held her up and hugged her in that dim past in the Southland—must have called her by sweet, English love names. She tried to make a picture in her mind which might, perhaps, be like this father, but the days when those strong arms had tossed her up and caught her and when those bearded lips had uttered those sweet words were too remote for that. It was a sore trial to her that she could bring no picture to her mind, not even an indefinite, blurred picture like

that of the tall man, which she might hang on memory's walls, and love and whisper "Mother" to. But there was none. She was sure the father was a painter because she could remember that he had bade her look at things upon an easel. There came to her during this dreamy day, also, a dim vision of a quaint, old church, and a solemn graveyard, guarded by sentinel poplars. What connection this graveyard had with her babyhood she could not guess. Perhaps the bearded father painted there in days long gone. Perhaps the mother, whose faintest image would not come back to her memory, lay buried there. Where that half-forgotten graveyard was, she did not know. It was somewhere in the South where grapes and olives grow, and that was all that she could tell of it. It was a faded picture in her memory, faintly outlined, dimly seen.

To grope and grope among these shadows of the past and never find a solid tangibility; to wonder and to speculate as to even what her name might really be; to yearn to feel those great strong arms of the big English painter clasped around her, while he tossed her high in air or bade her look upon the glowing sunset, which kissed the rough corners of the ancient church with red caresses and made the martial poplars look still more like sentinels as they stood black and precise against its flaming background—that was all she had, was all that she could find of those long past happy days in the sunny Southland where grapes grow and olives bend the low branches of carefully pruned trees in orchards that seemed to her, as she remembered them so vaguely, to reach miles and miles on the flat plain on which the church stood, and even to climb a little way up the first gentle slopes of the mountains which were somewhere near, but where she could not tell.

The first sharply defined memories in her mind were all of Paris. How she got there, how she left the churchyard in the place where grapes and olives grow and got to Paris, she could not even guess. In Paris, ever until she had met her Pudgy, her lot had been a hard one. The old woman with whom she lived as a small child had left an ugly image on her memory. Bah! She could see her

yet. And she was dead now. When she had lived with her she had had three companions. All were little girls, and all were very much afraid of the old woman, who sometimes beat them and was often very drunk. She shuddered as she thought of that old woman; but then she smiled again because the old woman had gone from her life and Pudgy had come into it.

Dear little Lizette! That sunny soul of yours had helped you through many shadowy places before you found safe haven in the studio whose windows overlooked the Gardens of the Luxembourg. Sordid, pestilential dangers, that ever lie in wait for young and pretty creatures there in Paris, as in every other city on this strange old earth of ours. And, indeed, she could see as she sat there in the studio that day, thinking about the unhappy past because it was such an amazing contrast to the bright and shining present, that it had been her ability to smile and suffer which had saved her for her Pudgy, had saved her for herself. It had kept her from grieving over sorrows which would have cast down many a girl apparently of a sturdier determination, far, than she.

It had made her smile when others might have wept—or worse. Such hunger as she had known, for instance (and there were days gone by which Lizette sometimes recalled now at table with a happy shrug and inward congratulation) had never tempted her to wrong a human soul, not even her own soul—and they are our own souls for which most of us show least consideration. When in her very early conscious life, in the days, that is, of the old woman, back when first she began to recall hard knocks and real privations, she had had to work sixteen hours a day in an artificial flower factory for fifteen francs a week, which the old woman took. Then her sunny soul had helped her laugh at the hard work, and her small, wise head had helped her make what little money she could save from Nemesis go far indeed. When, one day, an artist spied her and begged her to pose for him, she was duly thankful for the prosperity which came from it, but she never lost the wisdom in that little head of hers, and, as the sunshine in that soul was ever bright, no matter how the

clouds might lower outside of it, she could use her wisdom without too much sorrow over the rebuffs and real privations which it sometimes brought to her.

What Lizette knew she had learned with very little conscious help from others. Even in Catholic France, she really had not had much chance to learn about religion. She had a dim knowledge of the personified Deity, and with this knowledge had come a very beautiful and lovable conception of the Holy Virgin, which was, perhaps, not strictly orthodox, but which had been vastly comforting to her on many days and nights when she had sadly needed comfort.

After she had crossed the Seine from the high lofts of the flower makers to the equally elevated studios of the artists, her quaint, lovely Virgin, all her own (there never was in any other mind a vision of the Virgin just like Lizette's) had sometimes helped her greatly. Her love for her personification of the Holy Mother was not coldly theological. She really knew nothing definitely of the arguments of any church or creed. She imagined Her as a warm, loving, but invisible entity who would listen to the story of her sorrows when they came, and from whom emanated peace and comfort even in the face of worry and privation. On this conception of the Virgin, almost without other knowledge, Lizette had built a little faith that was all hers; quite different it was and simpler than the religion taught in churches; but it had been most helpful to her. She was really a Pagan, for her ignorance of the rules and rigors of religion as well as of almost all its sublime beauties, was appalling. But this faith she had, this faith in Mary, God's holy mother.

She became, through force of circumstances, strangely self-reliant. After her flight from the old woman she had been alone, and it is not good for a young girl to be alone in Paris, but she trod her little way unflinchingly. At first, after she had begun to pose for artists, she had been wholly without friends. For a time there had been a woman artist who had taught her much about the rudiments of "school knowledge," had taught her to read easily and opened up the small world of books which she

could reach to her. Lizette had loved this woman artist very dearly, although she was ill and often cross and sometimes could find no good in Lizette's posing, no matter how faithfully the little model tried with tired limbs and aching head to please her. But she had gone away from Paris and had not come back.

Of course, there had been the Latin Quarter girls, good-natured, superficial creatures without thought of past or future. They had been companions to whom she had been glad to chatter when she had been tired with posing. They posed in the schools, those big girls, and often told Lizette that she could make more money if she would go there, but she had never gone. Still she often talked with them. One could not always sit in solitude, she had told herself. With the artists she had been ever ready for *bon camaraderie*—with limits. One or two had tried to overstep the bounds and failed. She was not afraid of them, and it was with no shudders, such as come from dangers dodged, that she thought of them, as she sat there, overlooking the Gardens of the Luxembourg. Indeed, she laughed aloud, as she sat there alone, and thought of one jackanapes from England. He had named her the "tiger cat *p'tite*" and with good reason, in three flaming scars which still showed plainly, two on one, the other on the other, of his cheeks. When he first appeared in public, after the episode, she had regarded these scars with calm curiosity and, while she marveled, rejoiced greatly at their emphasis. She had not dreamed that there had been such potency within her finger nails. It was very satisfying. When she was disconsolate she sometimes sought for a glimpse of the English student and his scars. A moment's gazing at them would make her feel quite gay again.

"It is hard for me to feel the certainty," she reflected, "that with my so little fingers I could make the so splendid stripes upon the face of him. But, of a certainty, they were there. Bah! the great beast Englishman! I am most happy that I did it—that the Blessed Virgin and myself did do it!"

The story of this fierce encounter had flown like wild-fire around the Quarter and cost the big Englishman

much, both in beer and peace of mind. He had left his course at Julian's unfinished finally, and gone home to England, where there is no law to prevent husbands from beating their wives and where, Lizette commented, he would doubtless tell that the scars had come to him in honorable combat with overwhelming odds of many men. "And all that time, while he is saying that so big lie," she added, "in his English heart it is that he will have the know that I—I, Lizette, the Blessed Virgin and the small Lizette—made the so pretty picture on his so ugly face."

Lizette's reward was great. Her place was fixed. Ardent but misguided students never gave to her "the bother" after that. Such enterprise was recognized as extra hazardous. With some she was "good comrade," certainly, but after that it was most firmly understood that Lizette did not wish to have "the bother," and that anyone who overstepped the very definite line which she had drawn would be liable to such red stripes across his cheek as those which marked the absent Englishman. Such had been the position which she had made for herself in the Quarter before she met John Murdoch, and the making of it had required as much force and originality of character as many a success apparently much greater has required of variously striving ones in this queer old world.

And so Lizette sat and thought about the past. There were dreams of the future, too, within her pretty head, but they were vague and half-defined. They did not go beyond the studio. Pudgy was ever the central figure in them, but they did not go beyond the studio which overlooked the Gardens of the Luxembourg.

It was with a start of real surprise that she realized, suddenly, that it was almost time for the return of Pudgy.

The nutshells and the kernels—one so sadly broken—she locked into a little desk where her small treasure hoard was hidden, and her gentle melancholy induced by them and by these, some sad, some happy thoughts about the past, vanished in the bustle which went with the preparation of Pudgy's second breakfast.

CHAPTER VII.

AT THE MOULIN ROUGE.

Although John Murdoch's father was a rich man, he did not send much money to his son. John Murdoch had said before he went to Paris that he did not want much money, and he had not taken very much. He gave little to Lizette of those things which meant the expenditure of money. This was not a matter which he had carefully thought out. It was merely a natural circumstance. Their compansionship was almost ideal. What they needed that they had. He, with his work, and she with him; they had no time to waste in spending money sillily.

In their living they were never extravagant. In New York, indeed, their menage would have been considered most simple. In the Quarter, that is, among the *working* students of the Quarter, it was eminently, unusually, comfortable. There was a solidity about it which was absent from any other, among the folk they knew. It was orderly and in its air of permanence differed from the make-shift life which is common to the Quarter still, and was even more apparent in those old days.

Lizette rarely asked for money. She had no idea that Murdoch was a rich man. The knowledge would not have interested her particularly had it been imparted to her. He did not hide it. It simply seemed unnecessary to state a fact so unimportant. But still Lizette was rich in all those things which really counted to her. She was rich in the contentment which comes from lack of worry about material things. She was rich in this home which she had made for Murdoch, and, above all, she was rich in having him always with her when he was not at work. What times they had. Almost always they dined at the

studio. An old woman cooked the essentials of their meals for them. The delicacies were always made by Lizette herself. Every French woman knows how to cook; she is born knowing how to cook. But sometimes they went out to the little table d'hôte restaurants, which abound in the Quarter, and where one can get a very respectable meal for a franc and a half and really dine in luxury for three francs—with wine! And on rare, very rare, occasions, they went to such grand places as the Café des Ambassadeurs, or the Voisin.

Generally when they dined outside the studio they went elsewhere afterward; they "made a night of it." These nights were varied. Sometimes during the season, they meant the Grand Opera. Sometimes they meant such lively places as the Jardin de Paris or the Moulin Rouge. Oftener they meant some café chantant in Montmartre, where they could very pleasantly pass an evening amidst the oratorical and musical flamboyancies of the students who philanthropically (or for beer) entertained their fellows there with songs or extravagant oratory.

Kentucky was often one among the impromptu speakers at these café gatherings, which the general public discreetly kept away from, and with good reason. The public is not loved and never was of Paris students. The appearance of a butcher and his wife in holiday attire at a café chantant in Montmartre once caused a riot which lasted for three days. The haughty students were so incensed by his presence that they tabooed the café-keeper who had let him in so thoroughly, even after they had spoiled the venturesome butcher's fete-day clothes and broken all the windows in his shop, that he had to sell his café and go away. A doggerel poem of many stanzas was pinned upon the ruins of the butcher shop's front windows. It informed the unfortunate man that in the artistic mind he was so closely associated with things to eat that should he appear again within the purlieus of Montmartre there was danger that he might be mistaken for a dead pig instead of being quickly recognized as a living one, and devoured upon the spot. The warning was heeded and the poor butcher disappeared. Once in a very

great while the nights of Murdoch and Lizette meant the Café Domperille. That they had met there made the place sentimentally attractive to them, although there was naught in common between them and the class that frequented it. Murdoch was in Paris for hard work, and the Domperille crowd was there for what it thought was play. Lizette was in Paris, as it seemed to her that she was on the earth, for John Murdoch and for nothing else.

On this particular evening they dined in state at the Voisin. Lizette was charming in a new and pretty gown, and the reaction from the afternoon of solemn meditation made her unusually gay. In everything she saw there was a joke. How happily she laughed, that evening, as they sat in much magnificence and ate their dainty dinner! She ordered it, and each dish must be greeted by great surprise and much delight by Murdoch, else it would have lost its flavor. The waiter entered into the spirit of the little merry-making and was most grave and solemn as he listened to Lizette's hushed whispers, given behind a screen of menu card so that Pudgy should on no account hear what was being ordered for him to eat. It was all too short, that dinner at the Voisin. While they sat dawdling over their black coffee at its end they discussed the matter of what form of entertainment should follow it. They decided on the Moulin Rouge, where they had not been for months. In leaving the Voisin, Lizette gave to the waiter two whole francs in tribute to his cleverness in hiding what she ordered from her Pudgy.

The drive to the Moulin Rouge was jolly, but it was because they went there that John Murdoch hurt Lizette the only time he ever hurt her during all those years together. The episode so impressed them both that they hated the place afterwards and never went there again.

As John went in he saw some friends from America at one of the little tables. There were five of them. Two had been his classmates at Cornell. There were Mrs. Pascoe and her niece and ward, Miss Markleham, and there was old Judge Barry. They saw Murdoch as he passed and Murdoch bowed and called out that he would come back. He took Lizette to another table a long dis-

tance away, and as much because she urged him as because he wanted to himself, he went back to see his friends, leaving her with some people from the Quarter whom they had found. He told her that he would return to her in a few moments.

Murdoch was not overjoyed at his meeting with the ladies, and he had his reasons. Before he had gone to college he had thought himself in love with Mary Markleham. At all the important college games she had worn his colors, and when commencement came she had journeyed to his college town, and it had been a posy sent by her which had adorned his buttonhole as he had been graduated. Before he left New York for Paris there had been strange flutterings in his heart when her name was mentioned, and a correspondence, long since ended, had flourished for a time between them. She looked a very lovely girl that night, and if she remembered the last letter which she had written to him and he had never answered, she made no sign. She was frankly pleased at seeing him again, but he was, at first, uneasy in her presence. Soon, though, so unaffected and delightful was her manner, so impersonal was her interest in what he told of student life in Paris, that he forgot his worry and thoroughly enjoyed himself.

Once or twice, as his eyes rested on her face, a quick comparison of this girl with the little one who waited for him back farther in the hall, flashed through his mind, but there was no pleasant flutter in his breast this night as he looked at Mary Markleham. His thoughts turned toward Lizette, and he was glad of it. It pleased him that the love he knew was genuine should stand this little test so well. But time slipped by much faster than he realized. He had thought very little of his home and the people in it since he had been in Paris. He had rarely, even, brought the old days at college to his mind, except to tell funny stories of them to Lizette when she was curled up, listening, at his side, and begging that he should make her laugh with the so droll tales of when and where he learned so much. But this night the ladies had many things to say to him of folk he knew. The Judge had seen his

father lately, and spoke of him. His old classmates brought many things which he had half forgotten to his memory with a rush.

It was not especially surprising that he did not go back to Lizette in a few moments. Indeed, two hours had passed before he suddenly, and with an honest pang of shame, remembered Lizette—Lizette, whose only thought was ever of him. He said his good-nights hurriedly and hastened to the table where he had left her. The people who had been there when he had taken her there were still sitting at the table, but Lizette had gone. They said that she had told them that she must go and asked one of the older women to take her to a cab. This was the old woman of whom they bought their coals. The students were giving her a treat that night. She had trusted one of them against the better judgment of the Quarter, and now that he had money he was treating her to an evening's entertainment as a reward for her faith in his very human nature. She was a motherly old person, who took a personal interest in the affairs of all her regular customers.

"I went with her to the cab," she said to John, "and as we went out we saw you sitting at a table with some Americans. Little Madame" (you will see that the old French woman did not know) "she called to you a little, oh, a very little, but you did not hear. I told her to call louder, but she would not. And she said to me, 'you must not disturb him. He is with old friends from America. I know who they are. They are to take supper with us at the studio later, and that is why I must hurry away. I must be ready for them.' And she made me make haste to find for her a cab. It seemed strange to me that, if they were to take supper with you later, she should not stop to speak with them, but I found a cab for her and she drove away. But, M'sieu," and here there was more than a trace of anxiety in the old woman's voice, "when the cab started she was crying, softly."

Murdoch understood at once the pathos of Lizette's little lie about her knowledge of his friends and it made him choke with guilty consciousness of his neglect. He

hurried out. He, too, passed the table where the Americans were still sitting, but he only looked toward it and bowed good-bye. He did not stop and gossip this time. All that was decent and manly in him rose up and chided him for the first thoughtless thing he had ever done to the little girl who never had and never could show him one thoughtless sign. Had she really gone to the studio? He knew why she had told the old woman the lie about having to prepare supper for the Americans. She had not wanted anyone to know that he had friends to whom he would not introduce her. Poor little Lizette! Not maid, nor wife, nor widow, yet so true! So very true!

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE STUDIO.

On that ride to the studio Murdoch was glad, for the first time in his life, that he had, by chance, hit upon one of those desperate cochers who are prone to whip their horses and drive like mad. He was even profane in French, when he spoke to him, which was most unusual, and constantly threw at him from between his teeth a piece of French slang which is exactly equivalent to the American "push on the lines." The driver pushed on the lines with such enthusiasm that it was a very short time, indeed, before the cab reached the studio. But Lizette was not there. Murdoch was distressed. To place after place—the studios of people whom they both knew—he was driven as rapidly as possible, but he found her in none of them. Finally, more worried and remorseful than he had ever been in all his life before, he told the driver to go slowly up the Boul' Miche, so that he might think of some other place in which to search.

He guessed at the depths of dark despair into which his lack of consideration might have plunged the little one, and there were in his mind visions of the Seine—that muddy, narrow stream which had so disappointed him on his first day in Paris. And beyond them was a picture of that ghastly morgue, where they put the dead behind a plate-glass window opening on the street, so that passers-by may view and perhaps identify them.

On his way he passed the Domperille. He did not look toward it, but as he passed the strong voice of Kentucky called his name. At first he thought he would not stop. He did not want to see Kentucky; he wanted to see Lizette, and he did not pause. But he bethought himself

that Kentucky might help him in his search, so he turned back and called to him. Kentucky met him on the sidewalk.

"You are looking for her?" he queried.

Murdoch's face gave answer.

"I tried to take her to the studio, but she would not go. I had no idea what to do. I brought her here, finally, because it is the only place where I have credit and I didn't have a sou. I was—a little frightened. She seemed to be—excited. You understand. I don't know what the trouble is, but I hope it isn't anything very serious, old man."

"I neglected her," said Murdoch, with bitter self-accusation. "I neglected her while I talked to some people from America. It was in the Moulin Rouge, and I left her with others while I went and talked to them. It had been such a happy evening up to then. It's a shame, Kentucky, and I'm a duffer."

They turned and went inside the café. On the way Kentucky said:

"She wanted to sit at one of the outside tables—a particular one. She seemed to have some reason for wanting to sit there. She said she wanted to be there just once more—or something like that, but it's a pretty raw night and I got her to come in. I knew you would be looking for her, Murdoch. Here she is, right over here."

But there she was not, nor was she anywhere else around the café. She had disappeared as mysteriously as fog does before the wind. They were astonished. Kentucky, particularly, who had just left her sitting there, was amazed and much distressed.

For hours they searched for her. They questioned the police, and, along toward morning, they even went to that frightful place with the ghastly show-window. Finally a grave sergeant of police, who had, he said, had much experience with women, asked them if they had been back to the studio during the last few hours. They had not thought it worth their while to go there. It was, apparently, the studio and its associations that she was fleeing from. The sergeant advised them to go back. There

Murdoch found her, wrapped up in her own particular little rug, a small bundle of misery.

"Eet ees that I saw you as you drove up to M'sieu Kentucky on the sidewalk," she said, sobbing. "I am so vairy much ash-amed; so vairy much ash-amed. So I could not wait until you came into the café, for I knew that before all those people—those people whom we care not at all about—I should be crying. So I hurried here. I supposed that you had been with your friends all the time until you went to the cafe, but when I came here I found that you had been making the gr-r-r-and search for me—that you were so meeserable. The concierge told me that you woke her up and were so meeserable and so much frightened! And then I felt so—oh, so vairy weecked! I was afraid that if I went out it was that I should miss you when you came in, and when you did not come in again I was afraid that I had best go and look for you, only I did not know where it was that I had better go. And so all that there was which I could do was to lie here and cry—oh, to cry so vairy much! I am so vairy weecked to you! So vairy weecked to you! And why should it be that you should not sit with your friends and talk of the country that is your home, if you should want to? I know—I know that it is not for me to have the say. And if it was that it was for me to have the say, my Pudgy, my say would be to you that you should always do what thing would be most pleasing to you. But it is not for me—it is for you—to have the say. You are so good to me! Oh, Pudgy! Pudgy!"

"What made you run away from me? Was it because I was so long in coming? I am sorry I was so long. But they were old, old friends, and while we talked of people that I know in New York, and while we talked of the old college days, I forgot how fast the time was passing. Won't you forgive me, little one? Won't you?" pleaded Murdoch.

"It is not you but I who should forgiveness ask," said Lizette, miserably. "It is I, and, oh, I do! Please, please forgive me. I must tell you something that is, oh, so vairy weecked! But I must tell you. You must know

what a small imbecile is this Lizette, whom you have think you love, before you tell her that she is forgive."

And then she poured out a small confession, but by the manner of her telling of it it was plain to see that she thought she had been most grievously at fault. She told how her soul had been stirred with curiosity to see these people from his home so far across the seas, and how she had induced the old woman who sold coals to walk with her, so that from the other side of a pillar, which partly hid her from him, she could stand for a moment and watch the party at the table.

"Oh, it was weecked," she said over and over to him, while she nestled in his arms there in the studio. "It was vairy weecked, vairy, vairy weecked for me to stand and look at you as if I were the spy. But so I did. And when I saw that girl—that girl who comes from where your home is—and saw you talk to her and saw her look at you, I thought bad thoughts. I thought that when you were with her you had forgotten me. I have the thought, Pudgy, that I hard worked to make myself unhappy. I have the thought that you have been so vairy good to me that I tried most weeckedly to feel most meeserable. It is so sometimes with women. I think I tried to give myself the jealousy, and I have fear, Pudgy, that I did it."

Then Murdoch—foolish Murdoch—told her the little story of Mary Markleham. He told her that he had at one time thought he loved her; but he added that he had only learned what real love was when he had met and known her—Lizette. He told her that before he had come to Paris that girl had danced with him at college hops and worn his colors at the college games, but he added that nowadays he did not care to dance with any-one, but only keep his arms around her—Lizette. He told her that once he had thought that he could spend his life and be happy with that other girl, but he added that now he knew he could not, that in all the world there was only one woman for whom he cared at all, and that one woman was Lizette.

This made her very happy—then. This made her nestle

in his arms and love him and feel much pride that she had won him—then. This made her feel that always he would have his arms around her and that never would he look upon another woman—then.

CHAPTER IX.

A DINNER PARTY.

It was a month after the flight of Lizette from the Moulin Rouge and Murdoch's search for her that she told him she was glad it all had happened.

"If it is that you have the certainty that you are glad of me and not sorry of the losing of that other girl, I am most glad it happened. Of a certainty I rejoice. For never, Pudgy, never once before had you told me that you loved me—loved me, Lizette—as you told it to me then, after you had found me in the studio."

"I never loved you so before," said Murdoch.

"Then shall I often run away," said Lizette, laughing, "so that each time your love will grow for me."

"You must never run away from me again," said Murdoch.

There came to him, as he said this, a strange feeling of uneasiness. It seemed almost like a hint of evil in the future. She must never run away from him again! That meant that all their lives must be together, and that meant—many things. Not all his life would be spent in Paris. That he knew. He must go home some time. And when he went he must take her with him. There could be no doubt of that. He thought this over carefully and slowly. He must take her with him. She must be ever with him. The real soul-sorrow that had bitten him that night when he had lost her for a few hours only taught him that he did not care to live without her.

The problem was a difficult one to solve, for his people in New York had never known Lizette, and he knew that their opposition to his marriage to her would be hard and

bitter. But he solemnly made up his mind that when the time came that marriage should take place and that where he went she should go, what he had she should have. He had no thought that he would ever return to the old home in America for an extended stay. He knew, without conceit, that he was on the road to success in his painting, and Paris is the place for painters—Paris or somewhere else in France. He thought of speaking to her of it, but he did not. He reasoned that it would be better for him to go home first and have the struggle, which he knew would be waiting for him there when he told his plans, before he told her of them.

The idea of a secret marriage he put from him. He should never give anyone the right to think that when he led his loved one to the altar he did so with feelings of any kind but pride. He reasoned foolishly, but his foolishness was thoughtful foolishness. He did not speak to her about it. They were too happy as they were for him to disturb the fine serenity of their relations. But when the time came—then he would speak to her and tell in whispered words about his plans for her. Certainly he should take her to New York. She surely deserved that recognition. He should take her to New York that she might see America—that land which was to her a land of wonders—so that the people in America whom he knew should see her and know how proud and glad he was to call her wife. On the day—the very day—that his work in Paris ended, he would tell her all these things. How happy she would be! He smiled softly as he thought of it.

His progress in his work was exceptional. He was well liked by his fellow students; though one could not have called him a popular man. He was too grave and earnest, too little given to merriment for that. But with the masters he was popular. His art was unmistakable. There was a firmness of purpose in what he did, a certainty in his conceptions of his studies and a sureness in his way of painting them, that few students showed. He won the *Prix des Beaux Arts* and rushed home to tell of it. It was his picture, “*Parting*,” that took the honors, and

surely none but he must take the news to her. The other students regarded him with astonishment. He did not linger to receive their high congratulations. Some shook their heads and smiled. Murdoch's devotion had not passed unnoticed in the Quarter. It was too unusual.

She was like an elf gone mad with joy when he told her of the great news. Ah! But that was something! To carry off the Beaux Arts! Yes! And Pudgy—did he know that she had posed for "Parting?" Did he remember? Or had the memory gone from him in his joy? It had not gone from him? That was very well.

She insisted on a celebration. They had stuck close at home since the night when their evening at the Moulin Rouge had had so bad an ending. Now they must celebrate. He agreed and handed her a hundred franc note, and told her that she must be cashier. She was overwhelmed, for a hundred francs is almost twenty dollars. *Tiens!* But it was wonderful, this boy of hers who won great prizes and then spent such sums in celebration of his victories! But she agreed. Indeed only one person in all Paris was happier that afternoon than was John Murdoch, and that person was Lizette. *Voila!* She was proud of him!

Lizette was lost in deep and solemn thought. It was a problem which must be carefully considered—this dinner of the celebration. At last she spoke:

"Yais," she said, slowly, "it is that we must have the great big fun? Is it not so? It is so. We must take with us M'sieu Kaintucky. He has not many of the good times, unless he gets them with the absinthe, which is bad. We have so much of happiness—we can surely spare some pieces of it to Kaintucky. It is that we must drive around and get him, and take him with us."

And it was that they did drive around to get him, and that his joy was great. Murdoch decided on a little restaurant not far up the Seine. Lizette loved the water, although she knew it only from the little steamboats that ply up and down the muddy stream that splits Paris into halves, and this plan greatly pleased her.

The steamboat landing from which they were to begin

their water journey was at the foot of the wall of the Gardens of the Tuilleries. A king had had it built for the landing place of his royal barge. Now the two-sou steam-boats stopped at it. And as Lizette stepped from it to the grimy little steamer, Murdoch thought that she was fitted to its ancient uses.

A loud voice called his name and made him turn as they were about to board the boat. It was Fitzpatrick's voice, and he stood there at the top of the river wall, puffing and blowing as a man will after he has chased a hurrying Paris cab for two or three long blocks.

Murdoch stepped back from the gang-plank and Lizette and Kentucky followed to the dock just as the little steamer, with much ado, started on its journey.

"What upon earth are you in Paris for?" Murdoch shouted to the figure on the wall.

"I'm a pilgrim and a stranger and I'm looking for a friend who wants to eat," said Fitzpatrick.

Lizette went close to Murdoch and whispered in her happiness, so loud that they all heard:

"And he, Pudgy," she said with earnestness. "And he. He is far away from home. He has just come here. Cannot he go with us, too, and also have the happiness? We must have many. I have so much to spend!"

"When did you get in, Fitzpatrick?" Murdoch asked.

"Just now."

"Got anything to do?"

"Not a thing on earth except to see you and your friends. How are you. Hip! Hip! for the banker's son that won the prize of honor. I saw it in the "Figaro," not ten minutes ago."

"Come along and eat with us, in celebration of it," said Murdoch. "We're going to a little place I know of up the river. Come on."

"I'll do it. Murdy, you're a wonder. We're all proud of you. You do me proud. If you do me any prouder we shall miss the next boat. I've already made you miss one; besides, I'm hungry. Come on."

They went.

The table was on a balcony overlooking the river, which

was bright with small boats and gaily decorated little steamers. On the terrace between the balcony and the river the French love for gas-pipe arches dotted with colored globes had had full play. As darkness came these little lights made the lawn look bright and lively. This little restaurant is one of the places strangers know not of, but in good weather its tables are always full. Murdoch had been there only a few times, but the omnipresent hat-buyer seemed perfectly at home there. He was a never-failing source of wonder to Lizette. While the busy, happy little hat-buyer had disappeared to have a consultation with the *chef*, whom he boldly claimed as a friend, she expressed her wonder at him.

"Some day," said Murdoch, "I shall take you to America where such strange things grow."

She looked quickly at him and smiled. It was the first time he had ever said that to her.

Lizette gave the order for the dinner to the *chef* himself, not to any waiter. The monarch of the kitchen could not think of hearing what Fitzpatrick's friends wished to eat, except from their own mouths.

It was a merry dinner. It began at half-past six, and ten o'clock had come before it was ended. Lizette was hostess and was overwhelmed by the great dignity. With her own hands she served the dishes. It was agreed that Murdoch must sit still and look as pretty as he could.

It was the first time Lizette had ever seen Fitzpatrick for more than a moment at a time, and the breezy little man delighted her. She pleased him, greatly, too, and her English filled him with a wild joy which was not approached by Lizette's puzzled pleasure in his Irish-French. Kentucky was happy and contented. He loved that pair—Lizette and Murdoch—and gazed proudly at them as if they were his children. Ah! If he had known the truth that night, as he learned about it long afterward, what a dinner that would have been for him. If to the happiness of Murdoch's great success could have been added, then, the knowledge of that other happiness, the news of which would sometime come, when it was almost too late to please him, how overflowing would have been the

cup of joy of poor Kentucky. The failure of his youthful hopes of great success would not have mattered. The years of disappointment which he had even then passed through and all the sorrows of his aimless, wasted life, would have rested light as thistle-down upon the shoulders that were that night stooped by them and, later, became so bent and burdened by them that the effort of the bearing almost bore them down.

But Kentucky was most happy this night, and so sparing of the wine that he lost none of all the charm of the affair.

Each year two baseball nines were, even then, organized among the American students in Paris. The games were not such great affairs as nowadays they are, but there was much fun in them. Kentucky asked Murdoch if he had been asked to play. He told of the last year's game.

"I don't believe the game this year will amount to much," he said, "but there have been some great games in the past. Harvey was the best player in Paris. He went home this year. There was always a fight between the managers of both nines to get Harvey. The funny thing about it was that Harvey had a wooden leg."

"Why I knew Harvey," said Murdoch. "He limped, but he couldn't have had a wooden leg."

"Yes, he had," said Kentucky, "and he's got one yet. That was another funny thing about it. No one dreamed that he had a wooden leg. He limped a little, but no one would dream, to see him walk, that he had actually lost a leg. It had been cut off in a railroad accident in America, when he was about eighteen or so, and he handled the artificial substitute better than most men can use their real ones. He showed that there was something radically wrong with him when he went up and down stairs, but at other times he merely seemed to have a peculiarity in his gait, and not much of one at that. And on level ground he could run like a deer. The day for the great game came. We had Harvey for our nine, which was otherwise pretty weak. When we went into the field in the ninth, we felt reasonably certain that we should be beaten. Harvey was our only hope, and he had

been playing the worst kind of ball. All our fellows felt down in the dumps. There were three men on bases when Harvey showed what stuff he was made of. Some of the fellows thought he had been soldiering, but they never charged him with such a thing again. As I said, they had three on bases, just waiting for a good hit to take 'em home. If they got there we were done. We knew that. They had their very best batsman at the plate. Harvey was playing centre field. That fellow at the bat was a wonder and we knew it. He made a specialty of hot grounders—and they *were* hot ones. There wasn't a man in our crowd that would think of trying to stop one of them. They would have burned your hands right off you. Well, he hit one out toward center field, where Harvey was standing. You could hear it hum. Harvey didn't reach for it and no one blamed him. But he *did* hold out his wooden leg in front of it. The ball struck that wooden leg with the noise of a stone hitting a board fence and went straight up into the air. Harvey caught it neatly and sent it home in time to make a double play—and we won the game.

"Well, that night the fellows and the girls all gathered at the Domperille to talk about the game. Percy Plummer was telling the story of our victory, and he got to the part where Harvey saved the game for us. 'Harvey,' he said proudly, 'just stuck his leg out for that grounder, and it hit it with the noise of a hammer on a timber. He caught it as it came down, and sent it home and saved the game for us.'

"Percy expected everyone to laugh. But you see there were not half a dozen people in Paris who dreamed that Harvey had a wooden leg, outside of our little crowd, that knew him well. Some of the girls even wasted pity on him, and two or three of them exclaimed, in chorus, 'Oh, poor Mr. Harvey! How it must have hurt him!' 'What,' said Percy. 'Didn't you know that Harvey had a wooden leg?' 'Oh! Go on,' or words to that effect, was the incredulous reply from pretty nearly every one, who was listening. Well, Percy proposed to prove it. He pulled himself together and kicked Harvey's leg with all the force that

there was in him, just to show them that he was right. But—he didn't kick the wooden leg; he kicked the other one. They have never spoken from that day to this."

Fitzpatrick demanded more. Kentucky was plainly pleased by the success his little tale had made at this most sumptuous feast.

"Did I ever tell you about Darcy and Eaton?" he asked Murdoch.

"No," said Murdoch.

"Well," they were inseparables. When they first came to Paris they each had a little money and they both had the same old hallucination that the little money would last forever. They always traveled together and it was not very long before they realized that something must be done. It was plain that they must pull in their horns or starve to death before their next remittance came.

"They talked this over carefully and decided to retrench. And right there, for the first time and the last time in the lives of either one of them, so far as I know, they showed sense. They found a little studio, over back of where the Boullier is now, and they counted up their cash. They had enough to pay a full year's rental in advance, and they did it. Their idea was, that if the impossible should happen—that is, if they should quarrel—they would still have the year's rent paid and thus the quarrel could not possibly financially discommode either one of them. Together, they could get along somehow. Apart, they would certainly go under.

"I don't know whether it was because they had talked about it so much or not, but the quarrel finally came. I had heard nothing of it when I went up to see them one day. Darcy, you know, was a sculptor, and Eaton painted, principally in water colors.

"When I went into the studio, I saw at once that there was something wrong there. Darcy's mass was of sculptor's clay stopped at the middle of the floor, where there was a wide white mark, which went all the way across the room. Eaton's side of the room was clean and neat. I spoke to Eaton first, as he was nearest to me. Then I nodded to Darcy. I was never more surprised in my life. He

looked stonily above and beyond my head, and paid not the least attention to me. This was rather hard on me, for I had done a number of things to help the boy when he had first come to Paris. You know I was an old timer, even then, and I could introduce fellows and show them the ropes, even if I couldn't paint, myself. Well, I felt bad about his cutting me. It seemed a pity. But the Paris art student is a funny creature, anyhow. There was nothing I could say or do. I talked a minute with Eaton and went away.

"The place was up three or four flights of stairs—I forget just how many—and I had scarcely started on the second flight from the top when I heard somebody calling my name. I looked back, and there was Darcy, the man who had just cut me. At first I paid no attention to his calls, but at last I stopped and did my best to glare glassily at him. It was no use. The boy's face showed that he was really glad to see me, and, as he held out his hand I had to take it.

"'What's the matter with you?' I asked, before he had a chance to speak. •

"I never saw an expression of more completely injured innocence on the face of any man than his wore, when he answered, 'What's the matter with me? What's the matter with *you*? Why don't you come in to see a fellow when you come up to the studio?'

"'Why, you blithering idiot,' I said, 'I have just been up to see you and when I tried to say hello, you cut me dead.'

"'The trouble is,' he answered, 'that you stayed in Eaton's part of the studio. I make it a point not to see any one who is on his side of the white line which runs through the middle of the room. Eaton and I don't speak, you know. We've quarreled. Yes, indeed. Next time you come up come over on my side of the line and everything'll be all right. Eaton won't speak to you, then. I'm glad you understand about it now. I thought you had heard about it before.'

"And after that every time I went up there to see those two boys I could talk to one of them on one side of the line and to the other of them on the other side of the line.

But the minute I stepped across that line the fellow on the other side of it became as oblivious of my presence as if I had not been on the earth. I tried to fool 'em by sneaking across when they were not looking, and getting them very much interested in something I was saying, and then speaking to them. But I never worked it once. I don't know whether they ever made it up or not. But they had to live the year out together in the same room, anyway, for they had paid a year's rent in advance."

When it had been agreed that Lizette should order dinner, Murdoch had especially stipulated that it should be his privilege to order the dessert, a demand which greatly mystified Lizette, but which she yielded to, of course. It somewhat surprised her to have him go into the small hotel to order it; but this he did, and what he did was right, in her eyes. While the dinner was in progress and while the others were telling tales between the courses, he sometimes found her hand waiting for him beneath the white and ample folds of the table cloth, and constantly they kept up a telegraphic communication with their feet under the table. He said very little, except to her, and what he said to her was mostly with his eyes.

By and by, he asked Fitzpatrick where he had been in America.

"Oh, only in little old New York. It's good enough for me. Say, as a town, wouldn't that one make Paris sick? As a town, I mean—a place to really do business in."

Here he leaned back luxuriously in his chair and surveyed the table and all the people at it with an air that meant he was content with all the world. Finally he let his kindly little eyes rest on Lizette's face.

"But Miss—Miss," he began and stammered.

"Lizette, if you please," she said, smiling.

"But," he went on, thanking her with a nod, "there is nothing in New York that will equal this," and he swept his hand toward the restaurant and the river. "And, may I add," he went on, with Irish blarney, "that there is nothing in New York which will compete with the beauty of the Parisiennes, of whom you are the lovely representa-

tive here to-night. The hostess, the dinner, the surroundings are—simply great. Murdoch, you're a lucky man."

Then he turned to Murdoch.

"By the way, old boy," he said, "I saw your governor while I was in New York."

Murdoch was all interest at once.

"Dear old governor," he said. "How was he looking? I got a letter from him the other day in which he said everything was all right. But his letters are mighty unsatisfactory. They are about as lengthy as his endorsement on a check. His health, business affairs and everything else in America which would naturally interest me are generally summed up in two words, 'All right.' "

"Well, that just about describes the situation, so far as I could see," Fitzpatrick said. "He said you were not a wonder at letter writing, either. There's no doubt about his business affairs being as right as anything. I understand that he pulled out a quarter of a million in that last big railroad flurry, and I am told that neither he nor his has any reason to go hungry. He's mighty fond of you, old chap. Of course, you know that. He questioned me very closely about you when he found that I had met you in Paris. He'll be tickled to death over your getting this prize. I don't believe he quite understands why upon earth you should want to be a painter, though, and he intimated to me that when you came back to America you'd probably take his place in the bank, and, I suppose, his millions also in the end."

"Ecs eet zat your father is so vairy reech, Pudgy?" asked Lizette, with wondering eyes. "Millions! Mon Dieu! Think what you will do when you are reech."

"He'll probably buy his own pictures," said Fitzpatrick. "It will never do for a respectable American banker to have pictures from his brush hanging in such common places as the Luxembourg and other galleries of Europe."

"If anybody buys 'em, it probably will be me," said Murdoch, laughing.

"Seriously, old chap," went on Fitzpatrick, "when are you going back to America? I judged from what your

father said that it might be very soon. When shall you have finished your course?"

There was nothing about this question which ought to have been disturbing to anyone around the table. But it certainly did disturb Murdoch, and it certainly did disturb Lizette. Murdoch had not thought, definitely, about going home. He had been living in a dream—a delightful dream of happiness. He loved his work, and he worked hard at it. That his father might ever want him to return to America, and take his own place as manager of the bank, was a possibility which he supposed had been killed when he had chosen art as his profession. The problems which confront most young artists in Paris had not confronted him. He had had no need to worry about money. And for this very reason, perhaps—this feeling of security—the knowledge that all he had to do was to paint and that he would never have to worry about selling what he painted, if the people did not want to buy, had made it easier than it otherwise would have been for him to do good work and do thorough work. Pot-boiling had not been his portion. He was far from being an extravagant man, but what he needed he had ample money to obtain. Both he and Lizette were economical in their expenditures, she sometimes so much so that it made him laugh, but it had not been necessary, in order for them to live, for them to resort to any of those ingenious subterfuges which are so interesting to read about in novels, but which are really hard upon and seriously retard the progress of some of the art students in Paris.

The source of all these comfortable circumstances had not been brought closely to his mind for some time until Fitzpatrick spoke about the fact that his father expected him to go back to New York and take his hereditary place at the head of the banking house of the Murdochs. It seemed to him that if his father really expected that, it must be that he had wholly failed to take the art work which the son was doing in Paris seriously. While he was sitting there at that little restaurant on the Seine, a picture of the president's room at the bank, with its dark woodwork and its solemn chairs and its massive desk,

came back to him with intense vividness. The highly-polished letter cabinet and the private copying press with its little safe for private letter books, the occasional, far-off tinkle of the bell when the handle under the desk should be pulled, the answering appearance of a sedate clerk who knew just what to do and how to do it, almost without being told at all—all these things were plain before him. He tried to imagine himself sitting in that chair, writing on that desk, ringing that bell, and transacting the business of the bank. The picture was so incongruous to his present surroundings and the life that had been his among them, that his imagination was not vivid enough to conjure it up with any convincing look of reality. There, at that restaurant, on the Seine, with Lizette's little hand pressing his beneath the table cloth, with the colored gas-lamps arching overhead and with Fitzpatrick and Kentucky jabbering about the Latin Quarter, he could not realize that this other and different life could possibly be expected of him seriously by any one. It sobered him and took all the smiles away from him so thoroughly that Lizette, quick in sympathetic intuition, knew at once that there were thoughts in that great head of Pudgy's which were solemn, and instantly she became solemn, too. He raised his eyes from his plate to which they had fallen, in answer to a question from the little one. There was a worried little smile on her charming face, and he answered it as best he could with another one which had more of worry in it than had hers.

"It is that you said that you, yourself, were to order of the dessert, Pudgy," she said to him. "Well, if it is that it is so, it would be right that you should order it at the once. For we have already reached almost the time for it."

"Yes," said Murdoch, gravely, "it is that the dessert shall ordered be as soon as it is that I, with haste, can order it. Your English is almost good enough to eat for dessert, Lizette."

"It surely is that it is you that of it must not make fun," said Lizette, with much mock reproach, which ended in one of her rippling laughs—one of those laughs which ever

reminded Murdoch of the tinkling of the brook over the green stones at Bois le Roi, in the Forest of Fontainebleu. No one did and no one ever can again laugh in a way that will be as delightful to the ears of John Murdoch as were those liquid trills and quavers which meant in the old days that Lizette was happy. Poor Lizette! Poor little Lizette! She was ever happy in those days.

So Murdoch went away to order the dessert. There was an air of mystery about his going which caused vast speculation on the part of those who remained at the table. Wild were the guesses as to what was likely to appear upon the table as the result of his absence, and great was the delight of Lizette, when she heard what the two men said about her idol while he was away. At last he returned. He was followed by the waiter. When I record the fact that this waiter's name was Mola, there may be those among the readers of this story who will know where the restaurant was (and still is) and who will be able to bring to their minds' eyes that strange and devilish twinkle which lurked in those of Mola as he approached.

He bore on a tray four covered dishes.

"It's hot pudding," said Kentucky.

"It's pork and beans," said Fitzpatrick.

But little Lizette said never a word. Her eyes turned from the tray in Mola's hands to the eyes of her beloved and stopped there, happily, as they ever did when his sought hers.

"This one," said Murdoch, turning away from her to direct the great business in hand and pointing out one particular covered dish, "is for you, Lizette. I selected this dessert because I won the *Prix d'Honneur* and you were so happy over it. I hope that you will like it.

Murdoch looked down at the covered plate which had been placed before her, while Mola placed the other three. Her ever obedient eyes followed his. What he said was not at all in the nature of a speech. He was much embarrassed, and he hesitated as he tried to find his words.

"I am glad that you fellows are here to-day," said Murdoch. "There isn't any one else whom I would care to

have here. You chaps both know what this little girl means to me. You know that whatsoever small success I have made since I have been here in Paris has been due more to her than it has to me. She has been the animating cause of all the hard work I have done since I have been here. Had it not been for her, I am sure that instead of working hard and earnestly, as I have worked, I should have loafed and fiddled my time away. She has given me all that I have gained. Perhaps that may not be much in the eyes of other people, but it is a great deal in my eyes—and she has given it all to me."

Lizette's face was carmine.

"Pudgy!" she said in protest, softly.

"It is all true," Murdoch went on. "But I have never given her anything. We have lived our little lives, and had our little sorrows and big joys. The many joys have been her doings; the sorrows have, every one, been my fault. I don't believe that I have made Lizette think that I have been selfish or ungrateful, but I have surely not shown my gratitude in many ways which I might have found to show it. To-day, after I had won the prize, I wanted to do something for Lizette. Perhaps it might have been better for me to have done it when we were alone, but you fellows know us both, and like us, I guess. It has been very kind of you to come and take dinner with us. And so—and so—let us go on with our dessert."

His voice faltered perceptibly before he stopped. They all were mystified, and Lizette especially so. During all of his little harangue Murdoch had evidently been more or less deeply affected. His speech had often been halting. The enthusiastic interruptions which Fitzpatrick had thrown at him had not bothered him at all, but at the same time it had been easy for the others to see that it had often been hard for him to finish what he had wanted to say when he began. When he had finished, he began with real nervousness to finger his knife and fork, and to break off little pieces of the long bread-sticks, which form a very essential part of the meal at the little restaurant on the Seine.

Perhaps because he had told them to go on with their

dessert, not one at the table touched his plate or the cover on it. All the other diners had left the little terrace. It was fully ten o'clock and some of the gas lamps had been turned out. Presently Murdoch arose and, going around behind Lizette, himself lifted the cover from her plate.

What followed made Murdoch think of the first Christmas he could remember. There had been one thing, and only one, that he had wanted. His father had not been so rich in those days and had been too much absorbed in business to think much about the small things of his son's life. And John had never known a mother. It was a big bob-sled coaster that he wanted that Christmas. His father lived near the long hill on Park avenue, in those days, and there were boys in the neighborhood who had such sleds, but, while he longed for one, he had no idea that even Santa Claus would think of it and give him one. He had never mentioned his boyish longing to a soul. He was a very generous little boy, though, and *he* had thought of everybody and, so far as his little means would go, had purchased for each member of the family and all the servants what he thought they wanted most.

The Christmas tree had been his own idea; he had himself arranged it, hanging all the little presents on the tree. He expected all these things to come as a complete surprise to everyone, although he had had the back-parlor doors closed tightly all the afternoon, while he arranged his little gifts upon the tree. Then he went to dinner. After dinner he threw open the folding doors, so that the crowd might see what had been prepared for them. He had completely forgotten thoughts of gifts for himself, while he was making these arrangements, but the first thing that he saw after he had opened those doors was the coveted bob-sled, which had been carried in without his knowledge and placed at the very bottom of that tree. He was like a small boy petrified. He could not speak and he could not move. The surprise was complete. The older people had been expecting something of this kind, and no one said anything until the first shock of his boyish joy had passed. They probably wanted to hear what he would say. They heard, and what they heard was;

"Hully gee!"

When Lizette saw the gift that was waiting for her on that plate—a long gold chain from which a beautiful locket was suspended—the first important gift John Murdoch had ever given her, she, too, was overcome by a paralyzing surprise. She did not say as the small boy had, "hully gee!" but with her hands clasped and her smiles stiffened, by complete amazement on her face, she said, as only she could say it:

"Mon Dieu!"

And John Murdoch knew.

CHAPTER X.

“MARRY HER, YOU IDIOT!”

Their life in Paris was, to Murdoch, as it had been before. But the episode at the dinner had meant much to Lizette, and even changed the roadway of her thinking when she was alone. The things Murdoch had said, and the fact that he had said them boldly before the others, especially before Fitzpatrick, who had come straight from New York City, made her feel that she had a place in this world. I don't suppose that she thought as much about the world to come as she might have. Her Heaven was John Murdoch.

But sometimes, when she felt very happy, the thought of what Fitzpatrick had said about John Murdoch's father expecting him to go back, some day, to New York City, came to her and depressed her. She did not regard this as so very serious. Her life had not been one to make her give much heed unto the future. But she thought of it sometimes and felt a little shiver round her heart. It brought so many strange problems up—that possibility that Pudgy might sometime have to go back to please his father. Still they were very happy.

His picture, “Parting” attracted much attention. The newspapers gave it extended notices, and Fleron, in his feuilleton, one day wove a romance around it, which was wholly without truth, but which was very pretty. Indeed, the story was so charming that it caught the eye of no less a person than Alphonse Daudet, then in the very zenith of his fame and in the very depths of his excruciating suffering from rheumatism. Despite the fact that he had not left his home for weeks, he had had himself taken to the Beaux Arts and, Murdoch was told, had sat in his

wheeled chair half an hour before the picture. On the next day the young artist received a note from him, asking him to come and see him. Murdoch went, of course, and equally, of course, he took Lizette. The author of "Sapho," received them very kindly. He was exceedingly infirm, and the deep lines of suffering were drawn with sharp wrinkles in his face. He managed to get about his library by taking the back of a small chair in each hand, and pushing them along as one might use canes.

He told Murdoch that he had been most pleasantly impressed by "Parting." He asked him about the Fleron story. Murdoch told him that it was pure fiction.

"Ah," remarked the author, with a sigh. "I had feared so, and yet I had had hopes that it was true. Had it been true, I should have asked you to go more deeply into it with me, and I should have used it as the basis for a story."

"Can't you do so anyway?" asked Murdoch, clumsily.

"Oh, no," said Daudet. "You do not understand. I could get facts for my fiction from you, facts are the property of all the world. But I cannot base a tale upon the fiction of another man. His fiction is his property. The realities of our lives we do not own. The fictions of our imaginations belong to us undividually."

He shuffled painfully over to his desk, a high one, such as bookkeepers stand up to in making entries in their heavy books. He never sat down to his writing, he said. Once before his desk he could stand there leaning on it and write for three or four hours at a time, but it was a great task for him to go from it to his easy chair by the window.

"Would you like to paint my portrait?" he asked of Murdoch, after the matter of "Parting's" story had been discussed.

"Indeed, I should," said Murdoch.

"You shall do it," said Daudet, "if I can give you sittings here. I cannot possibly go to you at your studio."

Then and there the matter was arranged, and afterward, when the portrait was finished, Daudet pronounced it the best picture of him that anyone had ever made. I think

that it is now in the possession of his son, one of those to whom he dedicated "Sapho," with the wise proviso, that they should not read their father's story until they were of age.

Before Murdoch went away, he mentioned that the next winter he hoped to see the south of France, where the great author's childhood had been spent.

"But you shall not go south for some time, you say?" asked the author.

"No," I cannot go before next winter," answered Murdoch.

"Ah, I am so sorry," said the author with a sigh. "I may be dead then. I had hoped that you would be going soon, so that I might make some pleasure out of you. I have lately made much out of one countryman of yours. You know I have written some small tales about 'Tartarin de Tarascon?' Yes? You have heard of them? I am glad. Well your countryman was a Roman Catholic, and he was making—a—what we might call a 'pilgrimage de luxe' to Lourdes. I knew that he was going to the south of France, and as he came to me with a letter from a friend, I did for him what I could. I gave him some letters of introduction to people whom I once knew in Tarascon. I once knew them very well, indeed, so well, in fact, that I used them as the lay figures for the characters in 'Tartarin.'

"The devil must have been in old Daudet that day," he said, smiling cheerfully. "Yes, I am sure that the devil must have been in me when I selected the ones to whom I should give him letters. You know that I have been to Tarascon only once since I wrote the little sketches, and that that time I was both stoned and rotten-egged. Well, I gave him letters to those who had been most violent to me. He was very grateful to me, but when he presented the letters the people down there almost killed him. I laugh about it many times. I had so hoped that you were going south. I could have given to you letters which might have made your journey very interesting to you."

The two men laughed. Lizette did not.

"Suppose," she said, one day not long afterwards,

while she was reading a story by Daudet, "suppose that they had thrown at you the rotten egg! Afterward—Ah, afterward—I should have creep up to the so high study of M'sieu Daudet an' keel heem wiz ze knife!"

They had carefully planned that trip to the south of France as the first long journey which they should take together. Alas! If they could have known what trouble would have come by the time they went on it, they could not even have laughed at Daudet's joke. They must have shuddered at the thought of going southward.

The day they went to see a great woman painter was a great day. This celebrated artist had seen Murdoch's "Parting," in the Salon, and had so liked it that she had written to him to come and see her. It filled Murdoch with a pleasant glow to receive this letter and Lizette was almost wild with pride for him.

She lived—this great woman painter—in a big house, and was very rich. What she had, she had made for herself. She was not a man-hater. She admitted that human males sometimes were amusing, but she could not see their paramount importance. That is, she could not in her mind admit that they were so very much superior to human females.

When they entered her vast studio, they found a very dirty place, almost unfurnished, except for the easels and a few high stools, built out of rough lumber by the painter's coachman. Paint was everywhere—on the floor, on the walls, on the ceiling and even on the panes of glass which formed the big skylight. For the great lady had many kinds of bad temper, and whenever she had any of the kinds it was her pleasure to throw paint-laden brushes with much energy. Another eccentricity of hers was to dress in trousers and a blouse. She was verging on the sunset of her life, but her figure was still shapely, and the snugness of her trousers and the good cut of the blue-jeans blouse showed that she was still a little proud of it. The poor lady is dead now—rest her soul! She no longer rants and raves about the studio. She no longer shouts out to her hearers as she shouted out to Murdoch and Lizette that day that the world has

never yet seen a really great artist, or the work of one, while she declares that the pictures of the "so-called old masters" are as crude as the work on the first steam engine. She no longer smokes a hundred cigarettes a day. They had not been there that day more than ten minutes before she said, with emphasis, that in the days to come greater artists would be born than the world had ever dreamed of.

"We who paint to-day," she said in English—she was fond of showing her perfection in the language—"are but beginners. How long has God Almighty been at work in the making of this world we live on? *Æons* of centuries. *Æons!* And even now it is not so great a world. I am certain that there are other planets which would put our little one to shame. But ours is getting better; it is getting better. A million years ago, you know, we all had tails! I have always thought that it must have been most unpleasant to our remote forebears to have had tails. I am sure that *I* could not tolerate a tail. Our pictures to-day are just as much better than the pictures painted by the ancient Aztecs on their buildings in Mexico as we are better than our forebears who had tails. But we, also, are crude. Do you suppose that the enlightened generations which will come will worship at our shrines, as we worship at the shrines of the very bad artists who have departed, and who could not pay their rent to-day, if they were here? No, they won't. Old masters! Bah! They could not paint. The folk that will come after us will have advanced enough mentally not to be cads and worshippers of what they will know is bad and crude."

But Lizette, whose whole life had been surrounded by the most beautiful collections of pictures in the whole world, and who had her adorations, numbered this woman artist among them. It hurt her to hear her condemn her own work with the rest.

"But Madame!" she protested.

"I am not Madame," the great woman artist answered.

"Ah! But it is that when I say Madame I mean my respects to you—my dignity of meeting and of knowing you. What of your *own* masterpieces? Surely, they will

live in the time of which you speak—that time which has so far to come."

The great woman artist laughed.

"The term is absurd," she said. "My pictures are master nothings. They are no kind of pieces, except pieces of daubed canvas. If they are, my dear," and she patted Lizette's hand, for she was for a moment calm, "and if you must insist upon calling me 'Madame,' why then call them not masterpieces, but mistresspieces. You are a dear, and you do me good."

Then she turned quickly to Murdoch, and gave him a keen glance out of her sharp eyes. She was like lightning, sometimes, was this woman painter.

"She's a sweet child—this Lizette of yours," she said, sharply.

"Indeed she is," was Murdoch's surprised rejoinder.

"I have heard about the devotion of you two," the great woman artist pursued, as if she were in a hurry. "I have never been in love. I like it. I wish I might have been."

"Oh, Madame," said Lizette, with instant sympathy. "I am sorry—vairy sorry."

"Yes. So am I," the great woman artist said almost with a snap at the little girl, who stood looking at her with big eyes. "Yes. So am I. But I have never really loved a man. You love this one, don't you child? You really love this great big, hulking thing from America? You love him?"

For an instant Lizette paused, puzzled. Then she nodded her head solemnly and with conviction.

"Surely, Madame. Of a certainty I love him. One must love *him*, you know, Madame. One cannot help," she said.

"There are those who could," said the great woman painter. Then she turned to John. "And you," she said. "Do you love this little creature? I fancy that there is much in her to love. She looks so soft and fluffy that one naturally calls her little, but I fancy that there is a good deal of strength in her somewhere. You know what a small coil they can put a Damascus sword blade into.

I saw one once. Never think things are weak because they are little. That sword blade was coiled into a box no bigger than the one that holds powder for this charming Lizette's face. Somewhere there is a lot of strength in this one, this girl here. You'll see it some day, if you haven't seen it yet. Do you love her? Do you love her?"

The great woman painter spoke so rapidly that her words had a click, like that of a typewriter, about them.

"Yes," said Murdoch, coloring. "I love her."

"All right," said the great woman painter, "I want to talk to you before you go. All right."

These last two words she snapped out as if she were closing the cover of a box, which she should open again before very long, but which, for the present, she wished to very tightly shut.

She moved away and changed an easel, so that they might see an unfinished picture in a new light. As she moved it she took a great brush from the floor, a brush so big that she could never have used it in the painting of her pictures. She carefully dipped it in fresh paint, which stood there in a keg—not at all the kind of paint that is used in making pictures. Lizette wondered what she intended to do with it, but she merely held it in her hand as she walked from place to place, and talked, paying no attention to the fact that the paint from it was dripping on the floor, and that she had smeared much of it upon those natty blue-jeans trousers. She merely toyed with it and used it as another woman might have used a fan in conversation. But, presently, the especial use for which she kept that very large brush, which would hold such quantities of paint, became apparent. A man entered quietly, with what seemed to be a card or a letter on a silver tray. He stepped timidly. The great woman painter stopped perfectly still, leaving a sentence unfinished. The servant paused with what appeared like fright. He said not a single word, but stood as if rooted to the spot. For a moment the great woman painter eyed him as a hunter might eye a moose. Then she took deliberate aim and threw the brush. It struck him full

on the chest, the paint or heavy end, of course, going first, as the head of an arrow does. Some of it splattered up into his face. He turned on his heels like a soldier, and went out with what dignity was left to him, making no sound, except the clicking of his foot-falls on the studio floor. Murdoch and Lizette gazed in amazement, which the great woman painter evidently enjoyed.

"There," she said, with a small laugh. "That is what I keep those great brushes and that cheap paint for. It has worked me up to think about you two. It has worked me up. But I am not nervous any more. Not at all. I am now calm. It is such a great pleasure to throw good brushes with cheap paint at bad servants in fine liveries. Now, I can talk intelligently again."

They stayed for an hour longer and then took their leave. The great woman artist kissed Lizette in a funny, pecking little way, as if she did not quite know how to do it, and shook hands with Murdoch, after saying more very pleasant things about "Parting."

Just as their little open cab was starting away with them from before her door, she appeared hurriedly on the sidewalk in front of it—tight trousers, blue blouse and all. In her hand she held the big brush, dripping with fresh paint, and Lizette involuntarily dodged as if she were afraid that it would be thrown at her. But the great woman artist did not throw the brush. She called to Murdoch:

"You, Murdoch! Come here to see me! Come in here for an instant."

Lizette made a movement to get her skirts out of his way, as he climbed out of the cab, and the great woman painter called to her:

"Not you, little one. Not you, my dear. It is that big American of yours that I want to see. I shall not keep him from you long."

She pulled Murdoch inside the door and closed it. Her hand, which was wet with the fresh paint from the big brush, left a stain upon his coat sleeve, which Lizette was at much trouble to remove that evening.

She wasted no words,

"You love her—that sweet little one out there?" she asked, with her clicking words.

"Yes," said Murdoch.

"Are you sure that she loves you?"

"Yes," said Murdoch.

"Then marry her, you idiot! One does not love and find love in return too often. Marry her, you idiot!"

Then she pushed him out of the door before he could say a word in answer, leaving more smudges on his coat, and closed it after him with a loud bang.

Murdoch was very silent on the drive home. It began to rain a little and they had the top raised, and the rain curtain put over them in front, so that they were almost hidden from the street. Murdoch reached over and took Lizette's hand. He held it very tightly, so tightly that it hurt her, but she did not mention that. Oh, no, for he held it so tightly that it pleased her, too. And pleasure always overshadows pain. He did not tell her what the woman painter had said to him, and she did not ask him to. They were quietly happy on that homeward drive, which they prolonged considerably because Lizette was fond of driving in the rain. Murdoch was unusually thoughtful, and after they had reached the studio he was especially tender toward her. She hurried into her wrapper of rich red, so that she might not "catch the cold," which he ever feared for her. Then, for a long time, she sat quietly by him, on the great fur rug, gazing with him into the fire. Who shall tell what pictures her fond mind called up for her among those glowing coals. She was so proud of him! "Soairy, vairy proud!" He would be the great, great artist! Even the wonderful woman painter whom they had seen that afternoon had said so, and she was chary of her praise, as all the world well knew. These and many other things flashed through that little head of hers, and all the other things had much to do with Murdoch also.

Murdoch, as was natural, turned his thoughts toward what the artist had said when she had called him back.

"Marry her, you idiot! One does not love and find love in return too often. Marry her, you idiot!"

He recalled the words exactly as he sat there and thought, with Lizette's dainty head resting against his knee and her hand stretched up to his. He had not avoided thoughts of this perplexing matter more than most men dodge the thoughts of things which bother them. All men are cowards with themselves, sometimes. But the great woman painter had thrown the situation at him with such suddenness that he had had no time to dodge, and now he faced it squarely. He knew the trouble that would arise at home if he did as she told him. He could imagine the hard look upon his father's face. He had seen it there when other people had angered the old man, and he had no wish to have it for himself. He knew the way his sisters would deport themselves, if he should do as both his heart and conscience told him that he must do. There came the thought of all the many things which Lizette had come to mean to him. He turned her face up with his hands—how willingly those big eyes raised to his!—and looked down into it and smiled. After that there could be no longer any doubt of what was best for him to do. Not all the people in all the world could change his love, and that he knew. He decided that the woman painter had been right. He would marry Lizette, and love her and protect her and have her with him for so long as he and she should live. But that night he said nothing to her of it. Oh, Murdoch! What days and nights of misery and worry you would have saved yourself and her if you had but spoken then.

CHAPTER XI.

KENTUCKY'S CONFESSION.

Murdoch felt very little anxiety about New York in those days. His life with Lizette, in the studio which overlooked the Gardens of the Luxembourg, was the same. Real and notable success in his art work was on its way to him and he knew it. He painted four good pictures in the next ten months. Kentucky was their best friend, ever, the only close friend they had, and the strength of their love for him increased with the age of their acquaintance. He was a failure. Murdoch was a success. He leaned on Murdoch and looked up to him as a great man. But probably Murdoch had more help out of Kentucky than Kentucky had out of Murdoch. Kentucky had his weaknesses, his especial one was absinthe, but there was much grave and good philosophy in his kindly heart, and he loved Murdoch. Murdoch could sell his pictures and would not because he had no need to. Kentucky would sell his pictures and could not because they were so bad. But the two men loved as brothers might, and what Kentucky felt for Lizette was almost more than a brother's love.

One morning he hurried tremblingly up the stairs to Murdoch's studio. His eyes were bleared and his hands were shaking. There were, too, many other signs of a night with the absinthe. Lizette had never seen him so badly shaken before, and, for a moment, she shrank from him. He certainly was not a pleasant sight. But in a moment she went up to him again and took his hand.

"You are a very bad and wicked old Kentucky," she said to him; "but I love you just the same. Only you must, of a certainty, make me the promise that you will



KENTUCKY



not again drink absinthe unless it is that Pudgy or myself is at the same time with you. It shall ever be here for you. I do not ask it of you that you should never drink it more, but I ask of you that you shall never drink so much again as to make your hand so greatly shake. Therefore it is that you must drink only of the absinthe when Pudgy or your *p'tite* Lizette is with you."

She had never spoken to him quite like that before. It touched him and he promised. And he kept his promise.

After Kentucky had wiped his reddened face and pulled himself together, he asked Murdoch to go over to his place with him and help him a little bit, assuring him that what he wanted could be accomplished in ten minutes. Kentucky had never asked a favor of this kind or any other of Murdoch before, and, of course, the younger man told him that he would be glad of anything he could do to serve him. Perhaps it was with an idea of further self-abasement, as a punishment for his transgressions of the night before, that Kentucky asked Lizette if she would not come along and wait while Murdoch did the little task asked of him. The invitation surprised Lizette, for Kentucky had never even mentioned his living quarters to her before, and, while she had once thought of offering to go to them and see if she could not do something to make him more comfortable there, she had refrained from doing so, with the fear that they were so humble that the old student might not wish to have her see them. She went.

When they reached the bottom of the stairway leading to his lofty quarters, Kentucky hesitated for a moment, apparently considering whether it would not be better for him to ask her to wait below or over in the Gardens of the Luxembourg, until Murdoch should have helped him, but he started up the stairs at last without making any such proposition, and when they had reached the top of the last flight, took a key from his pocket and opened a door which was literally under the slope of the roof. He went in first and, after opening a window, bade them come in. Lizette literally gasped when she looked around the tiny place. The bed was in great disorder and there was no stove or other provision for heating the room on cold days except

a little charcoal brazier, which lay overturned in one corner. The walls were bare and dirty. There was no skylight. There was not even an easel in the place. But over in the corner was a rickety table with three legs. Kentucky, who took so much pleasure in making small conveniences for their studio, had not made any for his own poor room. On this table were his small stock of materials—those little boards on which the copies of famous pictures were to be painted over and sold to tourists as original studies by the students of the Quarter.

"You see," said Kentucky, as he made a place for Lizette to sit, by moving, with shaking hands, a dozen things from one of the two chairs, "I had to call on somebody for help, Murdoch, and so I called on you. Watch my hands shake. Well, I've got these heads of a Moorish girl all done except the tube of the pipe she's smoking. Those tubes must be put in. You see the shaking of my hands didn't make much difference anywhere else in her." He drew away a little so that he could scan one of the unfinished little pictures through half closed eyes. "No, I think it rather helped the things along. Made the pictures look impressionistic—eh? But the tubes, Murdoch—the tubes! I never can get 'em in with my hands shaking like this. I couldn't do it. They must be done with steady touches. And I've got to get these pictures to the dealer. I'm absolutely stony broke."

Murdoch offered to lend him money so that he could wait before he finished his pictures until he was in better shape. But Kentucky said that he did not care to borrow money. Indeed, Kentucky never borrowed money, another characteristic, which set him apart from the tribe of students in the Quarter.

"No," he said; "I don't want to borrow any of your money. I just want to borrow your nerves for a few moments. If you'll put those tubes in for me, I'll take those pictures out and get some money which will be all my own. And putting tubes into my pictures will be better anyway than putting money in my pocket. Just lend me your nerve, old man. Maybe I'll be able to pay *that* back some day."

So Murdoch put in the tubes with a few deft strokes, and Kentucky arranged the pictures in that little box he had devised which let him take them to the dealers before the paint was dry.

So shattered were the nerves of the old student that, when the tubes were in, his legs shook so that he did not dare to try the stairs. They had to sit there in his miserable little room with him for a few moments while he pulled himself together. His voice, as he spoke to them sounded full of sobs, but it was not really sobs but absinthe which made it shake. That he was suffering mental agonies also because Lizette had seen him in such pitiable plight was quite apparent, and he made no effort to disguise his weakness or to conceal its reason or condone his foolishness.

"Some day," he said, with shaking body and uncertain voice, "some day, when I have not made a beast of myself and am not unworthy to look at it myself, I shall ask you to come up here again. I have one picture here which I should sometime wish to have you see."

Here he had to stop talking for a time, because his trembling got the better of him and made his words hard to understand. Lizette took her own handkerchief and wet it with the water in the broken pitcher on the wash-stand. She softly wiped his face with it, wondering the while how it was possible for liquor to have so changed it. It was ordinarily a fine face, with lofty forehead and deep eyes and delicate lips. But now it was swollen and almost repellent. The lips were thick and flaming. The eyes were red as fire and almost covered by puffed lids. Dishevelled hair hung over the high forehead and hid its massive contour. Murdoch watched them for a moment and, then saying that he would come back immediately, left them together. He was sorry for Kentucky. There was much in the spectacle that would have been repellent to a stranger, but to Murdoch it was only pitiful. As he hurried down the stairs he tried to put himself in the older man's place. He tried to think how he would have borne the burden, if, years ago, he had come to Paris full of hope and zeal, confident of success and with a mistaken sense

of strength to do big things, only, in the end, to recognize complete failure and barely live by painting little pictures for the cheap dealers. He tried to think how firm his own self-control would be if he could see no reward in the future for him, no matter how earnestly he strove. He tried to conceive his own sensations should he be as this man was, without home or hope of home other than that garret room, without friends or hope of friends other than the few Kentucky had, without occupation that was congenial, with no rational recreation save that he found in those evenings at the studio which overlooked the Gardens of the Luxembourg. There was nothing in Kentucky's life, he reflected, as he made haste along the street, which at all approached real friendship or companionship, except what went to him from him, Murdoch, and from Lizette. He compared it with his own life, full of love, ambition and success.

"I'd drink myself to death, if in the doing of it I could forget past hopes and present disappointments," he decided, and never again did Murdoch blame Kentucky for his weaknesses.

Lizette, alone with the shamed and sorry man, probably went through a silent course of reasoning somewhat similar. Her quick woman's sympathy helped her, and the episode enlarged, not lessened, the place reserved in her big heart for the remorseful student. It distressed her beyond measure to see the long, gaunt frame of the tall man shaken by such mighty sobs. Murdoch soon returned with a great paper package full of shirts and collars, cuffs and fresh neck-handkerchief. Lizette again bathed the big man's face with the cold water, and then went out while Murdoch helped him dress. His hands shook so that he could not shave, so Murdoch put him in a chair and shaved him.

When this operation was completed, Lizette again bathed the student's face in bright, cold water, and with her own fingers fixed his new neck-cloth about the rolling collar which Murdoch had found after searching half a dozen shops. Kentucky had never changed the fashion of his dress since the days when first he had begun life in the

Quarter, and such old-fashioned things were hard to find. Then she bade Kentucky put on his coat and waist-coat and stand before her.

"No," she said, with critical bobbings of her small head, "I am not satisfy. Take off your shoes."

"Why?" asked Kentucky, in amazement.

"Take off your shoes!" she said, imperiously. "The questions must not be asked of me. I am the—the what you call him?—boss. Take off your shoes."

And Kentucky, wondering, did as he was bid.

"Now, Pudgy," said Lizette, as she lifted the great, mud-encrusted Bluchers, "it must be you who shall take these out and have them so much polish. Yais. They must have the shiningness of sunlight. And while you attend to this most important affair, it is that I shall sponge the dear old Kentucky until he have no spots on him. Observe! Observe the spots that now are on him! They must be taken all away. I have nevaire seen so many of the spots upon one human being at one time! He is like the leopard, only his spots are of the grease while the leopard's spots are of his skin and hair and cannot be sponged out. *Allons!* You to the polisher of shoes, I to my work of unspottationing!"

While Murdoch was away she sponged the humbled big man until as many of the spots as were not permanent were gone. To be sure he looked somewhat wet in places, when she had finished, but she solemnly assured him that that would pass away.

While they waited for Murdoch to return, she questioned Kentucky about the price paid for his little pictures by the dealers. He told her all about it and she thought a moment, deeply. Then she announced that he must make up his mind to paint very many of them within the next two weeks.

"It is," she said, "that over what you have to earn to buy the food and pay the rent, you must paint so many in the coming fourteen days that you shall have francs enough to buy a whole new suit of clothes. I shall order you to do so—now. I order you. And when I order, it must, of a certainty, be done."

"I've worn this suit so many years that I should feel a stranger in new clothes," Kentucky said in protest.

"That is very well," said Lizette, gravely. "You have been the most naughty boy. Of a certainty you have been *tres mechan!* All your badness must have the stop at once. All your goodness must come back. I have the thought that in a suit of all new clothes there will be easier times for you to be the good child. It must be done."

She tapped her foot upon the dirty floor for a moment in reflection, and then she said:

"This is the way in which the matter shall be accomplished. Pudgy spends much time at the schools. Each morning when he goes to the work I shall come here. He will bring me. I shall sit by you and talk to you while you paint these many small little pictures. Thus—*voila!*—you will not have the loneliness, and it shall be done!"

Before Murdoch returned this plan had been consented to. And the wet spots on Kentucky were pretty nearly dry. He had not *very* much the appearance of the leopard when they went out together, he with his little pictures in the strange long box which let him take them to the dealers before the paint was dry on them.

There were no people on the street when they reached it, and the sun was shining brightly. Lizette made the student turn around, slowly, so that she might get a complete view of him.

"It is pretty well," she said. "But with the new clothes you shall be even much better than it is now. You have the handsome face and the high, strong body, which Frenchmen do not have. In the new clothes it is that you shall be *vairy, vairy han'some.*"

And Lizette could not wait, now that the idea was in her head, to give Kentucky time to paint the little pictures. She made Murdoch lend the student money and she made him take it, and she went with him to buy the clothes. They were fine clothes and they made a great sensation in the Quarter. But Kentucky was not comfortable in them, and only wore them when he thought that

she would see him. He was much happier in the old worn suit and the ancient hat with its wilderness of little beams inside.

One day as Lizette sat by him reading to him from the New Testament—for Kentucky's literary appetite had turned from municipal improvement to religion for the moment—while he painted on the little pictures which were to pay his debt to Murdoch, he interrupted her.

"Don't read any more, just now," he said. "I'd like to talk to you. May I?"

"Of a certainty," Lizette responded, laying down the Testament with a sigh. The Bible was all new to her, and very fascinating. The promises it held out to those who did not sin were wonderful. They appealed strongly to her imagination, and, sometimes as she read, Kentucky explained them very simply and, she thought, beautifully. She had never had a chance to learn about religion. She had seen the outward show of churches and church ceremonies and she had been told about the Virgin Mary by some one, she knew not whom. But the beauties of it all were dawning on her for the first time, as she sat there in that little garret room, reading the New Testament to poor Kentucky while he painted those little pictures with such industry in order that he might quickly pay his debt to Murdoch.

"I am trying," said Kentucky, as he bent low over his work to paint some of those fine, straight lines of his, "I am trying to find out why I love you so. You are sweet and you are beautiful and good, and men love such things instinctively. But my love for you is more than that. John Murdoch is my friend and his affection for you, I am sure, is as big as man's could be for woman. You have done much for him and will do much, much more. But I do not love you because you mean so much, so very much, to my good friend. You are kind to me, and forgive my weaknesses and find what few good points are in me, and it makes me thankful. But my love for you is more than gratitude." He straightened up and pushed his work away. He rose and bent his great form over her and held her face up with a great hand beneath her chin, so that he

might gaze into her eyes. "I sometimes feel, you dainty one, that sometime in another life, long gone, it was my love and duty to fight for you and shelter you; to strive for you and work for you; to hold you in my arms as if you were a little child and toss you up to see the sunset as I once did my own sweet baby, long since dead."

Lizette was astonished by the vehemence and intensity of his strange manner and more so by what he said about "his baby." There was a yearning look in the eyes that gazed into hers so steadily, that seemed almost hungry. His action was uncanny, but she had no desire to shrink from him. She only gazed at him and wondered—breathlessly.

"I never knew you had a baby," she said, softly.

"It was long ago," he answered. "Long ago."

He sat down again at his little table with its three shaky legs and leaned his elbow on it. But never once did his big, deep-set eyes wander from her face.

"It was long ago, and I shall tell you all about it, sometime. Now I must think about my love for you and try to find its reason. It is real. When you asked me to stop drinking, little one, it frightened me, for I did not want to stop. I have much that is not pleasant in my memory, and when I think of it I cannot rest or sleep. When I think of it it fills me with rebellion against everything. And that is bad. The drinking has helped me at such times. It has helped me to forget. I found once that when I could not master my willful, agonizing thoughts, and felt as if I should go crazy with my sorrows, I found that absinthe would bring forgetfulness and a certain sort of weak, unhealthful pleasure. So I drank absinthe. You asked me not to drink it any more, and now I could not drink it if I would. I don't know why. That morning when you and Murdoch came here, I knew that you would ask it of me, and I wanted to beg you not to. I didn't and I don't know why your asking it should make me stop, but I knew it would, and I didn't want to stop. I wanted to have the comfort in me of knowing that when the sorrow of those years gone by should come to me and overwhelm me, as it does—I wanted

to have the comfort of knowing that I could make myself forget it with the absinthe. It *was* a comfort. But now I know it was a bad comfort, and I am glad you asked it of me. I can never drink the stuff again. Sometimes I yearn for it. Sometimes the longing for the drink is so great within me that it seems as if I should fly in pieces if I did not have it. Half a dozen times when I have felt that way I have gone out and sat down at a café and ordered it, but when the waiter brought it, I could not drink it, because you had asked me not to."

Lizette looked at him in simple wonderment. When she had asked him not to drink she had not gone deeply into the matter. She had not dreamed that poor Kentucky had a method in his madness. It had not occurred to her that he took the absinthe as an opiate which would dull the misery of painful memories.

"I am vairy, vairy sorry," she said softly, and laid her little hand on his big knotted one as it lay there on the table.

"You need not be," he said, "for I am glad—now. Nature is great and wonderful. She compensates. She always compensates. And she has compensated me. These days with you, while you have been here; reading to me, have strangely compensated me. I don't know how. I can't tell how. You see there has been very little in my life for me. I have no friend in all of Paris. or all the world, for that matter, but you and Murdoch. Worse yet, I have and have had no wish to have. I have for years turned from all intimacies, shunned all acquaintances when they began to border on close friendship for some reason which I have never yet been able to find analysis of. But *your* friendship—yours and that of Murdoch—it is satisfying. Strangely satisfying. I had nothing to look forward to before you came that had a pleasant feature in it, and that left me but the present and the past to live in. The present—you know what that must have been before you came. It was not good. The past! Oh, little one, that past! So dear! So bright! So full of life and love and happiness! Until one day it all changed in an hour. It changed. The life, the love, the joy all

passed away, and in their places came death and grief. I sometimes used to begin at the beginning of my life—away back, as far in the days gone by as I could make my memory reach. I recalled myself, as best I could as a small boy on a Kentucky farm. You can't conceive of that. It was a rough life, but it was a happy one. It ended. My people died. Every—person—whom—I—loved (he spoke almost as if he were counting the dire tragedies within his mind)—died. I wanted to die, too. When I went and stood beside the grave into which they put my mother, I wanted to die, too. She was the last to go, and her loss was the hardest loss. Well, I used to try to recall that life before they died, and bring back to my mind its littlest details, so that I could make the pleasant memories last as long as possible. Sometimes I have made them last as many as three days, by forcing little matters to come back to me. But when those pleasant memories stopped and the dreadful days of Death began—it was not bright and pleasant to remember them. It was very terrible. And then I drank the absinthe and forgot. My first grief lasted many years. I must have had as a child a large capacity for loving, for my capacity for grieving was so great after the objects of my love had died. Hard work on the farm at first, and afterwards in Louisville—that is a city, little one—helped me to bear the sorrow, though. I worked there for a sign painter until I came almost to be a man, and, somehow, the silly notion got into my head that if I might only have a chance to study I might some day paint something better than mere signs to show a man where he could buy sausages or get his horse shod. It was funny," said Kentucky, with the first smile that had lighted up his face since he had begun to talk in this strain, "it was funny about that sausage-maker's sign. That settled it. I felt that painting it disgraced me, and I have never painted a single other sign in all my life, and I never shall paint another sign before I die. I saved some money and I came here. You know the rest. I failed!"

There was nothing which Lizette could say to comfort him. It was all so true—his failure. It had been so real

and so complete that there could be found no saving clause in it; no word of praise or even of extenuation. Lizette sat helpless, and she felt it keenly. It would be the veriest cant to tell him that he had not failed, and he would recognize the cant and feel abhorrence for it. He got up, slowly, and walked into the dormer, where the little window was, which looked upon the street. He had to stoop in order to enter the small place, but he went in and stood there looking out, but seeing nothing, for a time. Then he came back and, sitting down, began to talk again.

"It has been strange about this life of mine," he said. "I left America with nothing there I cared for save the graves. I came here to begin life over—to find new interests and loves. I found them for a time and then I found—more graves! Yes, little one, I found them for a time. I found such interests as I had never dreamed of. I worked. Worked hard. Worked hopefully. Worked earnestly. But, alas! it was not in me to work well. It was not in me, child; but that I did not dream, at first. I knew my progress was much slower than the progress of the other fellows, but it is so easy to deceive ourselves! I thought because my advance was slow that it was also sure. I was happy in that feeling. I had a small allowance and I worked and worked and worked. I married."

"*Kain-tuck-y!*" breathed Lizette with soft intensity, surprised beyond all measure. "You married! Oh, *Kain-tuck-y!* And you nevaire told me so bif-fore!"

"No. I never told you so before. I have not spoken of it to anyone except myself before, in many years. Sometimes when I am here alone I talk of it aloud and call her name as if my calling her might bring her back to me. But it cannot, of course. It has been at times like that that I have gone and drunk the absinthe. It has been at such times, child, that I have drunk until I found forgetfulness. You understand it better now?"

"I understand," Lizette said, softly.

"We were very happy. She was wonderful—my wife!"

"Your wife," Lizette repeated in a low whisper.

"She was wonderful," went on the artist. "It may be that I see in you some things that are a little like her.

That may be the reason that I first began to feel toward you and Murdoch as I do. I cannot tell. Sometimes, for an instant, there is that about *your* face which makes me think of her. Sometimes I catch a modulation in your voice that makes me think of hers. Sometimes a ripple in your laughter makes me hear again the merry laughter of those days so long passed now—those days when she was with me, and my life held love and happiness and hope."

Lizette rose softly and smoothed the long hair back from his lined and rugged forehead. She said not a single word, but she stooped and kissed him on his brow, and then resumed her seat again.

"That was very sweet and lovely of you," said Kentucky, trying hard to smile. "So sweet—so lovely—that it made you seem again like her."

"I should be vairy proud if I could seem like one whom you had loved so vairy, vairy much," replied Lizette.

"Oh, many, many times you seem so like her that it makes me catch my breath," he answered. "Many, many times. Her people hated me. You know the French idea that a girl must marry money. She might have done so, but she did not; she married me. It made them hate me. That they would have killed me if they could have done so safely, I have no doubt at all, for they were poor and there was a man—a merchant here in Paris—who was prosperous and wished to marry her. It would have helped them all. But she married me, a poor man, and they hated me. I took her and they lost the money they might have sold her for, and so they hated me. Their hatred was so great that we had to cross to England to get married. You know that here in France one must have the consent of parents, if one has them. Well, we slipped away one night and crossed the Channel. It was in Dover that we were married—in Dover, where the laws are better. What a day that was—that day when I first took her in my arms and called her 'wife!' They would have killed me gladly, but, of course, they did not. I sometimes think that if they had, it would have been much better. If my mistaken life had ended then—then when it was so happy!"

"We could not stay in Paris. She was afraid of them. She was actually afraid for me. We tried to stay here, but we could not. Whenever I went away from her, even for ever so short a time, she was afraid. I had a small allowance then—a very small one, but enough so that we could buy food and shelter without selling pictures—enough so that I could keep on with my mistaken studying. But I gave up the schools and we left Paris, because she feared those who should have loved her.

"We went far away from here. We were very happy. It was very little that we had except each other, but we were very happy. I worked and worked and worked. Sometimes I think that in those days my work showed promise of good things to come. They used to tell me that it did, but the good things came so very slowly! I know that in that year with her I learned more about painting than the schools could have taught me in a generation. My love for her—it *made* me learn.

"And then there came the little one."

"A *baby*?" asked Lizette, speaking softly but with eager interest.

"Yes. Then there came our baby. How proud I was! How happy! Ah, then I worked! Oh, how I worked in those days! I had a double reason for it then, you know."

"I know," his listener said, softly.

"Yes," went on Kentucky, "then I worked, and sometimes it seemed to me that my work was not so very bad. It surely grew better as the days went on. I sold one picture—a picture so rich in memories, so full of hints of love and joy in days gone by, that afterwards I bought it back, and almost starved myself to pay the price of it."

He paused again, and tears came slowly to his eyes.

"I have it here, now, in this room. And some day I shall show it to you. I have tried to make a change in it, and, failing, have almost spoiled it. But some day I shall show it to you. Not to-day, but some day. I do not want to look at it to-day.

"The only dark spots in the three years that followed were those her father and her mother's sister made. I never blamed the woman much. I never saw her and I

think she did not know the truth about the matter or she would never have lent herself to such persecution of us. But the hatred of her father for me—the man who had robbed him, as he looked at it—was boundless. Such letters as they wrote to her. Such bitter, bitter letters! They made her poor heart bleed. I say this was the only cloud. That is not quite true. There was another; but even the sharp eyes of my great love did not see it. She was not strong after our dear baby came. I do not mean that she was ill, but I feared that she might become so, by and by.

“Three years passed in great happiness. We were not rich. We never hoped to be. But still we were not poor. That is, we had enough to eat and wear and keep good shelter over us. I might have ‘boiled some pots,’ and wanted to, so that we could have a nurse and thus relieve her of that labor. But she would never hear of it. She believed in me—that little woman did. God bless her! She believed in me and would not let me paint cheap stuff. I have often thought as I have sat here, working at these miserable little things, with which I make my living now, how it would distress her if she knew.

“I know now that as time passed she grew more delicate. I did not know it then. I did not realize it. Little one, I love to sit and dream of those days—only the dreaming leads to such great sorrow at its end.

“By and by there came some jugglery about my allowance. Suddenly it stopped. I *had* to go to the United States. I *had* to—or thought I had to. God knows how bitterly I sorrowed for that journey afterwards. Better it would have been that we had starved together than that I should have gone. I could not take her with me, for traveling in those days was expensive—much more so, even, than it is now. I could not raise the money, and so, God pity me! I left her behind. Every mile that came between us as I traveled was a new grief to me; every day of absence from her was a poignant sorrow. That is true.”

He rose again; again he went to the window; again he came back and sat down at the table with three legs, and as he did so, Lizette saw that his eyes were full of tears.

They trickled slowly down his face as he finished his tale of tragedy. He ended in broken sentences. He gave no details, and she knew why. She knew that every word he said, every thought of that dreadful time now passed by more than twenty years, was like a knife-cut in his heart. He spoke in jerks—as if unwillingly.

“While I was gone—the cholera—went there—and they—died! In America—I had only—graves. In France—more graves!”

He paused awhile before he spoke again.

“The picture which I told you of,” he said, at last, “and which I shall some day show you—the only really good picture that I ever painted, is of the churchyard where they lie. Had I but known when I was painting it that my beloved ones would sleep in it so soon! Ah, how my hand would then have trembled! But I did not know. I did not know until I saw—the graves. New graves—they were—new graves. They were not painted in my picture. I bought the picture back, and have it now. I shall show it to you some day.

“And that was why,” he said, “I drank the absinthe.”

His head dropped to the little table. It was still bowed on it when John Murdoch came to get Lizette.

Kentucky would not dine with them that night.

CHAPTER XII.

A SUMMONS FOR MURDOCH.

Fitzpatrick stayed in Paris until the first of January. His time was energetically occupied by the fascinating business of buying hats, but he called at the studio sometimes and was always welcomed there. One evening he said that he wanted to ask a favor of Lizette.

"There is a man in this town who has some things I want to buy," he said, "but the misguided creature fails to appreciate the latent beauties of my character. He hates me as a snake hates Ireland, my native land. I have often tried to understand how anyone could hate me, but I have ever failed to. The beauties of my character are so plain to me that it seems absurd for anyone to fail to see and to appreciate them. But this person is either blind or won't see. I don't know which. Indeed, he is so prejudiced against me that it is impossible for me to do any business with him. He will not talk to me; he will not take my money. And yet, strangely enough, he has in his possession certain models that I want to purchase. Now, what has come into my mind is this: Will *you* go and buy 'em for me?"

"*I?*" inquired Lizette.

"None other," said Fitzpatrick. "He will sell to you and you can sell to me. It will be the biggest kind of a big favor to me if you'll do it. Honest Injun! You shall have one of the hats. You shall have my gratitude for a permanent possession. The hat will be adorned by the face beneath it; the gratitude you may file away among your assets to be referred to, if you ever need it."

He stopped his highfalutin talk for a minute, and turned to Murdoch.

"You see, it's this way," he said. "The art of hat buying may not seem to you to be exalted. But it's the only art I've got. This chap has got some models that I want, and he won't do business with me. Now, if the little woman would only go and get them for me, it would help me out a lot. If there is any objection in the world to it, we won't think of it any more. If there isn't, why I'd like to get it over with to-morrow."

It was agreed upon and done. Lizette was delighted to be able to be of service to Fitzpatrick—she was ever happiest when she was working for the happiness of other people—and she spent a long morning doing what he asked her to do. She did it well and eminently to the buyer's admiration and satisfaction. The hats he wanted were sent to Murdoch's studio, and there, next morning, Fitzpatrick went to get them. They certainly were charming hats and were not made less so by Lizette, who tried them on for him, and showed him many beauties in the millinery which he would not have dreamed of had it not been for her. She also made suggestions to him about other hats, and he declared that she had a genius for the decoration of the female form. He insisted that she should keep one of the dainty bonnets for herself and she consented, provisional on Pudgy's approval. That brought up the matter of John Murdoch's father in the hat-buyer's mind.

"When is Murdoch going over?" he asked Lizette.

"Going to America?" she queried. "I do not know."

"I suppose he'll have to pretty soon," Fitzpatrick said. "His old man's not what he used to be. When I saw him last he seemed quite infirm. He's a great big chap—the old man is—and he's always been as straight in his body as his house has in its business. And no one ever questioned *that*, I tell you. I fancy that he's never been the kind of chap to talk much, but he certainly does love this son of his. You ought to have seen his eyes brighten up when he found I knew him. He didn't seem the same old man after he found that out. I'd always been a mighty humble person around that banking house, although I've done business there for a good many years. I'd never

seen further inside of it than I could see through the wire grating over the cashier's desk. Not many people do. But when I told the cashier—his name is Smith—that I wanted a draft on Paris, he asked me if I was coming over here. I told him that I was.

"'You spend a good deal of your time in Paris, don't you?' he asked.

"'Yes,' said I, 'I do.'

"'Ever happen to meet the old man's son over there?' he asked. 'His name's John,' says he, 'and he's studying art over there. Must have surprised the old man a good deal,' says he, 'to have a son of his turn out to be an artist, but he don't say much about it.'

"All the time that he was talking, I was thinking that if the old man should find out that he'd been gossiping about his affairs he'd probably have trouble. From what I'd seen of the old man, I'd made up my mind that he wasn't the sort that would go mad with joy to find his family matters being talked over by his employees, so I didn't say very much, except that I had met young Murdoch.

"'Is he getting on pretty well?' the cashier asked of me. 'You bet he is,' said I. He hadn't won the prize of honor then, so I couldn't tell him about that, I didn't know there *was* a prize of honor, as a matter of fact, but I said that he was the bright and shining wonder of the town, of course. I like Murdoch, and I always like to say good things about the people that I like.

"'That so?' said he.

"'That's so,' said I.

"'Wait a minute,' said he.

"I waited and he went away. When he came back he told me to go back to the other end of the room.

"'The old man'd like to see you,' says he.

"'All right,' says I, and went.

"He took me into the president's private office, and there sat the old man at his desk. I hadn't seen him for a year or two, and he has changed a lot. He showed his age. I don't know just how old he is, but that morning he looked a hundred. He didn't get up to shake hands with me and apologized for not doing it.

"I've got rheumatism pretty bad," says he, "and if you'll excuse me I won't get up. But I'm glad to see you. Very glad, sir."

"I shook hands with him and he told me to sit down, which I did.

"You've been doing business with us a long time, my cashier tells me, Mr. Fitzpatrick," he said, as a starter.

"Ever since I've had business to do with any bank," I said. "I wish I had more to do with you."

"Yes," said he, "I wish you had. I'm always anxious to see our customers get along well," he said.

"He stopped awhile then and fooled with a pen or something.

"My cashier tells me that you've known my son in Paris," said he, at last.

"Yes sir," said I; "I met him the day he landed there."

"Well, well," said he. "That's interesting. Do you go over often?"

"Four times a year," I said.

"Indeed," said he. "You travel a good deal," said he. "Have you seen much of John on your other trips?"

"Well," said I, "we got to be pretty good friends that time, and I always look him up when I'm in town."

"Getting on pretty well, is he?" the old man inquired. "You can't tell much from his letters. He isn't the kind to brag much," he said. "But he's a good boy, and I hope he's doing well in the work that he has chosen."

"I don't know much about art work," I said, "but if my judgment is any good at all, or if what I hear about his work can be believed, he's doing mighty well. I know a lot of people in the Quarter and they all say that he's one of the best men there."

"I'm glad of that," said the old man. "I'm very glad of that!"

"The old man is about as cold a proposition as anyone could find," went on the hat-buyer to Lizette, who was listening with absorbed interest. "I could see that he wanted me to talk about John, but that he didn't know just how to question me, so I thought I'd help by going right ahead without the questions, and I made up my

mind that Murdoch's progress shouldn't lose anything by my telling of it, either. Not that I could have made it any better than it really was."

"You are a vairy good Mistaire Fitzpatrick," said Lizette, interrupting him for the first time. "Of a certainty it was most nice of you to praise my Pudgy."

"Everybody praises him," said Fitzpatrick, "and I told the old man so. I told him that he was the hardest working man in all the Quarter, and I told him that everybody said he was one of the best men who had ever studied over here. I said that when he began to show his work to the public it would get as quick recognition as it had had in the schools. The old man was tickled to death. He forgot his rheumatism for a moment and again said, very slowly and emphatically, 'Well, now, I'm glad of that. I told him that if he studied painting I wanted him to be a damned good painter.' He looked at me and laughed a little. 'And you say he is a damned good painter,' he said, looking into my face as keenly as if I'd been a stranger who was trying to work him on a bad check.

"He certainly is that," said I.

"Dissipate any," said he.

"Not a bit," said I.

"I knew he wasn't *that* kind of a fool," said he.

"He isn't," I answered.

"What kind of a place does he live in? Ever been there?" the old man asked.

"Good enough," said I. "Comfortable enough—nothing grand about it," said I.

"No," he said. "He isn't *that* kind of a fool, either. I wanted to get over there to see him this summer," the old man went on. "I was going to surprise him. But I can't get away from here. I'm tied down here tighter than a dry goods clerk is tied down to his counter. And now I'm all stiffened by this rheumatism. I'm getting old, too."

"Thinking of the rheumatism seemed to make it hurt him, for he twisted up his face as if he had a twinge.

"Ever had the rheumatism?" he asked.

"No," said I.

"Don't," said he.

"‘I won’t,’ said I, ‘if I can help it.’

“‘That’s right,’ said he. ‘You’re sensible.’

“He didn’t say much for a minute or two. His rheumatism kept him busy. Finally he braced up and asked me if Murdoch had ever said anything to me about coming back to New York. I told him that I didn’t remember that he had. But I also said that that was not surprising, for we were not together enough for him to tell me everything that he thought about.

“‘I suppose he’ll come when he gets a chance,’ said the old man. ‘He’s a good boy. I never was so much surprised in all my life as I was when he told me that he wanted to be an artist, but I knew that there was enough of me in him to make it useless for me to tell him that I didn’t want him to be one. I’d thought,’ he said, ‘that he’d want to come in here and take my place, but he didn’t. He wanted to be an artist, and I’m glad he’s a good artist. It would make me mad if he should turn out to be a bad one.’

“‘He won’t.’ I said. ‘He’s already turned out to be a good one.’

“‘If you see him when you go back,’ said the old man, ‘tell him that I called you in to talk to you about him. Tell him that I’m glad he’s doing well, and tell him that when he gets a chance I want him to come over and shake hands. He’ll never be a banker, I guess, but he’ll have to have something or other to do with this concern when I am gone. He’s got lots of sense, that boy, even if he is an artist, and he’ll know too much to leave his business entirely in the hands of other people. He’ll have to give some time, eventually, to this bank, pictures or no pictures, and he’ll do it well, too. I’m not afraid of that. He’s practical—I know that. He showed it in school and college. And now you say that he’s a good artist, too. I didn’t suppose an artist could be practical or a practical man an artist. Funny, isn’t it?’

“‘Unusual, surely,’ I answered.

“The old man got up then. A clerk had brought in a card or something. ‘I’m glad you came in to see me, Mr. Fitzpatrick,’ he said to me. ‘Drop in when you get back from Paris. Tell John you saw me, and tell him to come

over when he can. Tell him it won't be very long before he'll have to take hold here some. I'm getting old and this rheumatism is likely to end my work here before long, I'm afraid.

"I hope not, Mr. Murdoch," I said.

"Well, it will before very long," he said. "Tell John it will. I'm not much on writing letters. Tell him to come and see me when he can."

"I will," said I.

"Come in when you get back," said he.

"I will," said I.

"Good-by," said he.

"Good-by," said I.

During the telling of this story Lizette had sat entirely quiet. She tried hard to call up in her mind a picture of this old man who was her Pudgy's father. How proud he must be. She thought that she would have liked to have seen his face when he heard that Pudgy had won the *Prix d'Honneur*. She was sure that he must have felt very pleased, indeed. But then that worry came to her again—that worry which had been the only jarring note at the little dinner party up the Seine. The father expected John to go back to New York and run the bank. And then? And then? And then? What would become of her when that day came?

"Did—did Pudgy's father—speak of me?" she queried.

"Why no," Fitzpatrick answered. "Can't say that he did. He don't know you, you know, as I do. He don't know how much you've helped his son."

The hat-buyer was embarrassed and he wondered instantly if he had not been in error in telling her about the interview. Fitzpatrick wondered as he sat there and looked at her how the whole matter would turn out. He was a shrewd, good-hearted fellow, was Fitzpatrick, and he knew that Murdoch's life with the little girl who sat there then before him was no mere Latin Quarter episode, to be dropped when the time for it was over and forgotten. He wondered how it would turn out in the end. He knew how it ought to turn out, he reflected. John Murdoch would never find a truer woman, if he searched his whole

life through, to love and cherish him than was Lizette. He idly speculated on what the old man in the bank would think of her, and decided that he would be pleased by her. He had gained a high idea of the old man's sense. It would be distinctly wretched judgment not to like Lizette, he thought. He had made up his mind that day in the bank that the old man wouldn't last long. He seemed very old and the wearing of his pain showed more plainly on him than he had told Murdoch. Fitzpatrick did not believe that Murdoch would ever leave Lizette. He was sorry, now, though, that he had talked about Murdoch's father to her. It was not like him, he thought to himself, to make a break like that, and he swore a little, noiselessly, but fervently, for having been drawn into the talk about the meeting in the bank. He realized that it might worry her, and he was truly sorry. He tried to be gay again over the hats which she had bought for him, but he could not bring the bright spirits which were habitual to her back to the little French girl. He could see that she tried, also, to appear light-hearted, but she failed, and when he finally went away he felt that he had given her poor payment for the trouble she had taken for him.

That night she spoke to Murdoch about it.

"When is it that you go to see your father?" she asked him, suddenly.

"To New York, you mean?" he said, surprised.

"Yais. To see your father in New York? Mr. Fitzpatrick talked to me of heem this morning."

And she told Murdoch the conversation in as great detail as she could remember it.

"It is that he mus' have the gr-r-reat pride of you," she said, with emphasis. "And it is that he has the very great big reason for to have the pride. As also I have."

Murdoch was sorry in a vague, indefinite way that the hat-buyer had talked to Lizette about his father. Fitzpatrick's account of the old man's sufferings had pained him, too; but he fancied that Fitzpatrick had exaggerated them. Rheumatism was not often fatal. His father had been bothered by it even before John had entered college. He showed suffering very plainly, always. Strong men, who

have had little illness in their lives, often do. But his father had made only the lightest reference to it in his letters, and he could not believe that it was very serious, more serious than it often had been. He would go over to see him as soon as he could, and when he did he would tell him about Lizette and then come back and take her over to him as his wife. Of course, he should say nothing about their life in Paris. That would be foolish and unnecessary.

He drew Lizette, who sat thoughtful and silent on the rug beside him, up into his arms, and almost told her what his plans were—those plans which had taken definite form after that talk with the great woman painter—those plans which had a wedding for their central episode. But again he hesitated. This was not quite the time. And again he waited.

Not another week had passed before the blow fell.

Murdoch knew the postman on that route, and frequently took letters from him in the morning as he went to Julian's. On this particular morning Murdoch was so muffled up against a blinding rain that at first he did not see the postman, but the latter saw him, and called out to him. He handed him a letter from New York which Murdoch recognized instantly as coming from his father. He opened it as he walked along, holding it under his big rain cape so that it should not get wet. He had not passed the Gardens of the Luxembourg before he had read it all, and stopped, almost dazed. It was like all his father's letters, very short. It said:

My dear son: I am not well. I hope that for your own sake, as well as mine, you will find it convenient to come over to see me at once. If your art work is not to claim your life, come over and take the management of the bank. That is what I had planned for you, as you know. My doctor tells me that I must give it up or die. I have no wish to die before I have to. Please let me know your pleasure in this matter. I have learned that you have taken an important prize. I am glad of it. Your success gratifies me. It may be that you will wish to continue as an artist. I hope not. At any rate come over here to see me. Truly yours,
JOHN MURDOCH, SR.

For the second time John Murdoch missed a day at Julian's. He stopped beneath the trees which extended

dripping branches out over the sidewalk from the Gardens of the Luxembourg. It was almost as if they knew, those trees, as if they knew and wept for the little girl who sat in the windows of the studio across the way so often, and listened to the twittering of the birds that flew among their branches and heard the soft, uprising shouts of the children who played upon the sward beneath them.

He retraced his steps very slowly, and climbed the studio stairs. Lizette was at work within, and singing as she worked. She heard his step and heard the door-knob rattle as he touched it. She thought it was the char-woman coming to her work and called "come in."

John Murdoch knew that matters must be very bad, indeed, to have made his father write such a letter to him. The story of his worry was written on his face as he went in so plainly that Lizette ran to him and put her arms around his great, wet shoulders with a little cry.

"Oh, Pudgy, what ees eet that has happen?"

He handed her the letter. She read it while he laid aside his cloak and hat and sat down, thinking moodily. After she had read the letter she went quickly to him, and put her hands upon his cheeks. She raised his face and looked at him. There was an expression of real pain there which cut her like a knife. He looked at her and tried to smile, but made bad work of it.

"When are you going?" she asked, simply. She did not question the wisdom nor the necessity for his departure. She did not weep. Her eyes took on a very dry brilliance from the fever of the heart within her, but she made no other sign. The thing had come to her which ever comes, eventually, to the Latin Quarter girl, and she took it as Fate. Murdoch's father, who loved her idol and who was beloved by him, was ill and wished to have him at his side. Plainly there was but one thing to be done. The earth seemed rising and the heavens coming down around her, but the way was plain for Pudgy. Murdoch did not answer.

"When ees eet that you go?" she asked again.

"I don't know what to do," said Murdoch.

Poor little Lizette! She knew. She told him,

"It is that you must make the haste," she said. "If it were not that he were ill, and *vairy*, *vairy* ill, he would not have written so. When it is, my Pudgy, that the first steamer sails, then it is that you must be voyaging upon it."

And it was so.

There were three days for preparation. Lizette never wavered. What Fitzpatrick had said had sunk more deeply into her mind, even, than it had into Murdoch's. He made his arrangements at his classes. He gathered up his pictures at the schools and spent many hours in hanging in the studio those which he liked best. "Parting" came home, and he hung it in the big front room, so that it was well lighted. Kentucky helped him hang his pictures and arranged a row of gas lights over "Parting," which set it off at night. Murdoch did many things to the old studio to make it bright and pleasant, which he had long planned to do and long neglected. It was almost feverish, the way he spent those last few days in beautifying and improving it. To Lizette it almost seemed, one day, as if he were trying to make the old place more attractive so that he would be certain to return.

While Murdoch and Kentucky labored at the studio, making it bright and beautiful, Lizette studied those personal belongings which he must take with him. It was she who carried his shirts to the *blanchiseuse* and brought them back again. With a table knife she corrected some of the plaits and ruffles in their bosoms, which did not seem to her to be properly arranged for the vast remoteness and great grandeur of New York City. She packed his trunks. She arranged everything. She did strange darning on his socks. She was especially disturbed about the underwear which he should wear on board ship, and very warm garments, properly mended and laundered and folded, were placed in the very top of his steamer trunk, so that he could easily get at them in the case of stress of weather which she thought would probably afflict him on the way across that wonderful, great sea, which he had told her of, but which she had never seen. He asked her if she would like to go with him as far as Liverpool, but she said no. She wanted to be near to the

old studio, so that she could get there quickly, after he had said good-by. She wept not once, although many times he choked and struggled to keep back the tears as he watched her at her work.

Her smiling face was the last thing that he saw as the railroad train pulled out of Paris.

It was smiling until the fluttering handkerchief in his hand held from the railway carriage window faded in her sight from a cloth reality into a mere white speck, indefinitely seen.

But then she wept.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CALL OF DUTY.

John Murdoch reached New York in time to ride in the old family carriage, with the curtains tightly drawn, as the chief mourner at his father's funeral, but too late to clasp his hand in life. It was like a nightmare to him. That four years had passed since he had gone away seemed incredible. He could not definitely feel the changes in himself, and so the changes in other people seemed all the greater to him. He could not imagine his father, pale and thin, worn out with age and effort as the encoffined face had shown him that the dead man had been before he died. It was a solemn, mournful ride.

His relations with his father had not been those of the fathers and the sons in story books. They had been, even in John's early childhood, good friends and good companions. As he approached to man's estate they had been undemonstrative, wholly trusting. After John had finished college—it was the summer before he had gone to Paris—they had been a pair of men who could sit together and not talk. Each had felt a certain satisfaction in the other's presence, but there had been none of that companionable dependence of feeling which sometimes is found between father and son, oftener is known by mother and child, and always exists—or always ought to—between husband and wife. He felt no violence of grief within that carriage as he drove slowly to his father's funeral. That he should even have known a feeling of real loneliness is one of those psychological phenomena which scientists can best explain. As he rode along the weary way to the graveyard that day he wondered what the professor of psychology at college would have said about it. He had

thought of the governor's death before it came, but the thinking of it had never meant more to him than a collection of mere words. Their companionship had been almost unconscious. They had been separated most of the time since John Murdoch had been big enough to feel anything strongly. But now that the old man was dead, was actually in that strangely fashioned casket, in that equally curiously shaped wooden wagon, which he knew was going on ahead of him, he knew that that companionship had been very real. He had scarcely recognized the body in that box. He felt that only then—when it was quite too late—he really appreciated the mind and soul and mental entity which had passed away when life had left that body.

When the past came to his mind he did not think of college days or of his life in Paris. His thoughts were only of the times he had passed with his father. They were not especially delightful to look back upon, but they had always been eminently satisfactory. Just before the crowd had come to the house to listen to the short prayer which was made there before the body was taken to the church for the regular funeral service, he had passed his hands along the smoothly polished sides of the casket which now was in the hearse before him in that long procession. He had said to himself, over and over again, as his fingers slipped easily across the shiny surface of the wood:

"Here is all that is left of my father. This is all that there is now of the governor. He is dead. He is dead."

But he had not realized it fully; he had known that at the time.

When he got home at last, after the short service at the grave, he sat there in the solemn, still, old house, without seeing anybody or really even thinking with entire coherence. The old-established order of things—his art work and his life with Lizette, there in the old studio, which overlooked the Gardens of the Luxembourg—had seemed so permanent. The feeling in him that the governor was over here, silent and reserved, but thinking of him always, as he had always had an undercurrent of affectionate

thought for him, had been so dear to him that it was hard almost to impossibility, to give it up. His heart cried out within him because he had reached New York too late to see him living or clasp his hand again. How he should miss those letters, often dictated to a clerk and almost as short as promissory notes. Realization came very slowly to him.

By and by the butler entered and put down by Murdoch a little tray containing many letters. John Murdoch turned them over idly in his hand. He knew that they were letters of condolence and he did not care to read them then. He let them lie upon the table and lapsed back into the condition of semi-daze in which he had been before the servant interrupted him.

The butler hovered respectfully about, putting small things to rights. He had told the other servants not to enter. It was kind of him to do so. He liked John and had known him since he had been a little boy in buttons. After he had finished his small duties he inquired if there was anything that he could do.

"Yes," said John Murdoch, "bring me a drink."

The butler brought a decanter of whiskey and some soda. In the Latin Quarter Murdoch had never drunk whiskey. He had never, as a matter of fact, drunk heavily before in all his life. But now he sat there gloomily and drank until all the whiskey in the decanter had disappeared. For half an hour afterwards he sat there stupidly. Later the butler found him lying on the floor and took him up to bed. It is probable that the butler thought bad habits had come to his young master through long residence in Paris. But, really, the drinking had been purely automatic.

It was late in the afternoon of the following day when he awoke and he suffered as men who have drunk too much are doomed to suffer. Many cards and all the letters which he had not looked at the day before, as well as many new ones, lay in neat piles on a small table by his bedside. Now, with his head throbbing from too much drink and an indescribable feeling of remorse and shame, he looked them over.

One was in a woman's hand, and he opened it to find that Mary Markleham had written to him. She was so sorry (she wrote) that his home-coming had been so sad a one. She hoped that he would stay long in New York, and while he lingered she hoped that he would find time to come to see her and her aunt, Mrs. Pascoe. The note brought back to him the memory of the night when he had hurt Lizette and searched all Paris for her, after he had lingered at the table with this American girl who now wrote to him. He never liked to think of that night and his memory hurried from the pain of it to brighter days there with Lizette—especially to the dinner by the Seine. For half an hour he sat there with Miss Markleham's open letter in his hand and thought of Paris. Then he went slowly through the pile of uninteresting letters until he reached its very bottom.

That last letter was thick and heavy, and on it were many of the postage stamps of France. It was from Lizette and he turned to it eagerly. She did not know about his father's death, poor, sympathetic child—she would have wept her eyes out had she known that he had cause to suffer—and so she wrote about the little gossip of her life alone there in the studio. She told him all the little things that she had done. She especially made merry over her first experience in a bank, where she had gone to cash a check which he had left with her. She recounted Kentucky's last funny story, writing partly in English, but branching off into French whenever she found that she could express herself better in that language. She told him of the love that was throbbing in her heart for him as she wrote, and he could feel it, breathed out from every line of all the closely written pages. She had only had two days in which to write this wondrous letter, yet she had put all the little things which she had thought might interest him into it.

He took up his father's business affairs, not because he wanted to take them up, but because there was no one else to do it, and he felt that at least he must look after the financial interests of the family. Besides, in the old man's will was found a codicil, stating:

"AND FURTHER: It is my request of my son John that subsequent to my death he reside in New York and endeavor to fit himself to take charge of the business of the banking house of John Murdoch, changing the business title to John Murdoch's Son. I say 'endeavor,' because there is a possibility that the said son John may find it impossible so to do, for his temperament and abilities may lead him wholly in another direction. In the event that my said son John shall find this to be the case, it is my request that he, with the assistance and advice of Jeremiah Smith, my trusted cashier, Thomas Morgan, my trusted teller, and Acker, Alsopp & Platt, my trusted attorneys, take such steps as he may find fitting to wind up my business in such a way as shall, in his judgment, be most to the interest of the heirs named in this instrument. In this matter my son's judgment is to be final and is not to be set aside in any particular by the judgment of the other executors named in this instrument, although I trust that he will take full advantage of their advice and counsel. I also wish to record the fact that so far from having been distressed by my son's tendency toward art, I have been highly delighted by the ability he has displayed in this most admirable field, and in this, my last will and testament, do hereby tender to him my heartiest congratulations, as I also tender to him my earnest love."

In the working of a banking house things must go on like clock-work. There could be no delay in the accomplishment of what rearrangement was necessary in the affairs of his late father's business, and there in the same old chair, at the same old desk, in the same old room, John Murdoch was sitting the third day after the funeral, trying to learn the things which his new life made it necessary that he should know. He was promptly elected to fill the vacancy caused by his father's death, as president of the corporation. All the directors knew that this had been his father's wish, and they felt that they should, at least, give the son a trial. In any event, his control of a majority of the stock would have settled that. There was much comment in the newspapers and elsewhere. For a young man who had been devoting all his time since college to studying art in Paris to become the president of a bank seemed most absurd. And, besides, this same young man had won honors with his painting! This made it worse. There were a few customers who withdrew their deposits, but the old directors, men in whom all New York had confidence, told such satisfying tales of John that they soon returned them again, for John Murdoch was putting the same

energy and application into the task of learning the banking business that had won him his prize in Paris. Night and day, day and night, he studied the unwelcome problems of his new field with an energy that was untiring, with rapidly growing intelligence and with what quickly became a real satisfaction. It had not been genius that had made Murdoch do well in Paris; it had been hard work. It was not genius, but hard work, that made him do well in New York.

He missed one mail in answering Lizette's letter. When he did answer it he sent one to her which was shorter, far, than hers had been to him, but that was to be expected of a man. He told her of his father's death and he explained to her about the codicil in the will in a way that touched her susceptible little heart much more deeply than she was able to express to him in her next letter. He told her that he should be detained in New York some time, but that it should not be *very* long before he should go back to Paris, to her. He explained to her that it *could* not be a very long time that he could stay away from her. He told her in the same words which he had whispered in her ear a thousand times, when they had been together, that he loved her. He sent her a little money. He knew that she would have been literally frightened by a large sum. He asked about Kentucky, and by the same mail he wrote to him, begging that faithful friend to look after Lizette and watch over her as if she were his sister. And he sent the large sum to Kentucky, to be used for her as might be necessary, but asking him to take some of it for himself, for he knew that if he did not Kentucky would have to paint those little pictures and might be forced sometimes to neglect his charge. She had taught him to be thoughtful of her, as she ever was of him, and he warned her that as winter was approaching she should provide herself with warm clothing and buy a new stove for the studio. The old one was pretty well burned out.

Indeed, Lizette was ever in his thoughts during all those moments when they were not upon his business, but those moments were not many. Swarms of old friends descended upon him and many new ones sought recogni-

tion. But he was true to his old love and his old friends in Paris, so far as his business would permit him to be.

But somehow that business grew ever more exacting. By some strange combination in his brain, it made him forget the pictures he had painted and which he had thought would absorb the working interest of all his life. In one letter he spoke to Lizette especially about his pictures, all of which were now in his studio in Paris. John Murdoch had never sold a picture. He asked her to care for them and spoke of them as "our pictures," which touched her tender little heart.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE TOILS OF CIRCUMSTANCE.

Kentucky wrote to Murdoch frequently, and fine, manly letters he wrote. He was glad to look after Lizette, he said, for she was well worth looking after.

"Old man," Kentucky said in one of his letters, "can't you come over soon? The little one is keeping up bravely, but she droops, my boy, she droops. You could never have known of her real devotion to you while you were with her, but now that you are gone she shows it to me. She does not complain, and she is not ill, but, dear old fellow, her wee little smiles are sometimes almost more pitiful than tears. She lives in the past. It is 'Pudgy said this' and 'Pudgy said that,' all the time. You should see the studio—charming, as it always was, and always ready for your home-coming. Always ready, old man! Aren't you ever coming home? Damn your banking business! What is the use of spoiling a good artist to make a bad banker? There are too many bankers already."

This letter worried Murdoch. He saw the pathos of it and he told his colleagues at the bank that he must take a vacation. Winter and summer had gone by this time and autumn was well advanced. He told them that he should only be gone a little while, and then he cabled to Lizette that he should sail the next day and asked her to meet him on the dock at Havre. A message from Paris came back almost as quick as thought:

"No, not at Havre. At home. Oh, Pudgy!"

His eyes filled as he read her message and he sent word to the big brown-stone house uptown that his traps were to be packed and brought down to the bank for a long absence. He planned to work all night that night in

order that he might arrange all those matters of dignified business which were concerned with that dignified bank.

His decision to take a bit of a rest met with the full approval of the directors. He had been working too hard; they all saw that and they also saw that he was a very extraordinary young banker and should not be permitted to overwork.

One of the directors, a venerable old gentleman, who had devoted his whole life to the matter of money, patted him respectfully on the back and said:

"That's right, Mr. Murdoch. Get a little sea air. It will do you good. You're a chip off the old block, a chip off the old block. Just like your father! Slow to think, but quick to act! A chip off the old block!"

So they all thought him. They knew nothing of Lizette.

It was before the end of banking hours that a respectful servant brought his luggage to the bank. It was piled in a neat heap in the corner of the president's room. It was eminently respectable leather luggage, as should be that of the president of a bank. Murdoch gave the man some instructions about the management of the residence and dismissed him. He knew that he should be at the bank all night making the necessary preparations for his absence, and he told the man to come back to the bank the next morning at nine o'clock, for the steamer sailed at ten, and sent him to the steamship office to buy his passage.

He had scarcely started on this errand when the cashier entered the private office with as much excitement showing on his face as was seemly in that banking house.

He held in his hand a little slip of paper which had just been brought in by a breathless messenger.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, "but here is bad news from Jones & Co."

Now Jones & Co. were among the largest connections that the bank had, and it had been supposed for fifty years that no bad news could ever come from them. But here it was, notwithstanding. With the closing of its doors for the day, the great firm had gone down with a crash that must carry many with it.

"Hum!" said John, with the characteristic impassivity of the banking house. "Yes. That *is* bad news. How much are we involved, Mr. Smith?"

"It is impossible for me to tell without a careful accounting. I can let you know by to-morrow afternoon."

"Hum!" said John Murdoch again, thinking of the steamer that was to sail at ten, and thinking of Lizette, to whom the ship was to have carried him.

"All right. Get it for me as soon as you can. I had planned to go away to-morrow morning, you know. I dislike to change my plans if a change can be avoided."

"I am afraid that it will be a very bad matter, indeed," the cashier responded, with an air of one who knew for certain that those plans would have to be revised.

"Hum," said John Murdoch, thoughtfully. He reached for a cable blank to the little rack at the back of the solemn desk at which his father had worked for so many years. He wrote:

"Delayed by serious business matter last moment. Will sail as soon as possible. May not be for some time."

For the more he thought about the failure the more he knew that such news from Jones & Co. was likely to be bad news, indeed, and that his presence would be needed in New York.

When he returned to his desk he rang for a boy and sent him out to cancel the steamship passage. Again business had intervened to keep him from his love.

When he had hoped to sail the next morning he had planned to work all night. Now that he was forced to give his journey up the business of the failure kept him at his desk as steadily as he would have been if the reason for his industry had been that other and more pleasant one. The doors were locked, but every gas jet in the great offices flared and sputtered as the bookkeepers labored at the figures made necessary by the failure, and in the president's room John Murdoch sat to hear their reports and see what could be done. It was after ten o'clock when a loud pounding on the door attracted the attention of a clerk, who went to open it. He took a cable message in to Murdoch. It was from Kentucky and it read:

"You don't understand the situation. Your message saying that you could not come has shocked her greatly. Have just left her. Your delays have made her ill, but she wouldn't let me tell you. Confound business. Don't let anything delay you."

For the second time that night, John Murdoch sat in a brown study at his desk. A great conflict went on within him. His duty was in the bank. Of that there could be no doubt whatever. The people whose trust his father had fully earned by years of integrity and hard work now placed their confidence in him. His leaving now might mean much to them. He carefully thought out, and probably with truth, that had it been so that the loss would have been all his, should his departure cause loss, he would have taken it and gone. But it would not be all his. The people whose confidence in the bank was based upon the reputation of his father for never failing vigilance and faithfulness in the handling of their money, now trusted him. He had accepted this confidence of theirs, and he must not betray it. He had taken Lizette's confidence, too, but he was not betraying that; he was only delaying his going to her until it should be possible for him to go with right.

Murdoch sent for Mr. Smith.

"How are you getting along with the Jones matter?" he asked.

"Much faster than I thought we could, Mr. Murdoch. We shall know exactly where we stand before we open in the morning."

"Look very bad?"

"Much worse than I had believed at first," responded Smith. "I am more than glad that, if it did happen, it happened before you had gone away, Mr. Murdoch. It's a bad business."

"I'm sorry," said Murdoch, with a tired sigh. "I'm very sorry that—"

He had almost said that he was sorry that he had not been safely on the ocean, where banking business must take second place, when the crash had come, but he did not finish.

He wrote another cablegram and sent it to Kentucky. It said:

"Sorry. Can't leave. Very serious matter involving others than self detains me. Explain to her. Get best doctors. Do everything. Will cable remittance to-morrow."

Next day he received an answer which was characteristic of Kentucky:

"Had, of course, done all I could before you cabled," the message read. "She don't need doctors. She needs you. You make me wild with your business. Come."

When the full report of the failure of Jones & Co. was turned over to him, Murdoch found that the banking house of John Murdoch's Son would not lose heavily by it, but he found that certain old and very highly respected customers of the house were likely to, if he went away. He cabled to doctors and sent one over from London to see the girl in the studio, telling him to report by cable. He did, as follows:

"Puzzling case. General despondency has resulted in great physical depression. Very emotional and might prove serious with such a temperament. Advise immediate change of air and scene. Suggest South."

Murdoch acted accordingly and cabled both Kentucky and Lizette, giving the former unlimited credit. He explained his own situation fully and felt sure they both would understand and agree that he must not desert his place of trust at such a time.

To this dispatch Kentucky made reply as follows:

"All right, you idiot, but it's all wrong."

So Kentucky and Lizette went down to Italy. Kentucky's letters at this time were almost as pathetic as they were profane, which is saying much. He repeated that it was not doctors but Murdoch's presence that Lizette needed, and he said things which he would not have said to any one whom he did not love in his strangely brusque and ingenuous way. He told John Murdoch what he really thought.

"Murdoch," he wrote, "you are an incorrigible ass. The little girl is eating out her heart for a mere sight of you.

You don't seem to understand that this is an extraordinary case. I can't in my heart believe that you class it with other 'affairs of the Quarter' which you and I both know of. If I believed that I should damn you so that my voice should reach across the ocean. And your memory? I would spit on it. She does not complain in words, but in lack-lustre eyes and lagging step; in languid hand and paling face her heart's complaint is voiced, and if you fail to hear it it means that yours is deaf—deaf to the little one for whose slightest sigh or whisper it should always listen keenly. I have to go to some obscure café to write these letters to you, for if she found that I was telling you the truth about her it would deeply hurt her. She would hate me if she thought that I was giving you 'the bother.' I can't believe that you thought for a moment that the money you told me to use, that damned, unlimited credit that you gave me, would ease her aching heart at all. What does she care for money? She wants you.

Aside from railroad fares and hotel bills on this Southern trip I have only been able to spend two hundred and fifty francs for her. I used to think that you were a great fellow, that at last I'd found a *man*. But the way you're acting drives me crazy. Don't you see, old man—you damned, unfeeling, unthinking, mercenary, rotten old man of business—can't you see that you are letting the greatest little girl the world ever saw go to everlasting smash without you? Why don't you come, you idiot? She's simply passing away from sheer love of you. It's a pity and a shame. I'm going to say something to you that I ought not to say, perhaps; that I had made up my mind I never would say. But you need it. It ought to be unnecessary for me to say it to you. You ought to know it and feel it for yourself.

"You are throwing away the best part of the best life that a man ever knew by your delays, and you are an idiot. I love you as I would a brother. I love you as I love Lizette, and certainly no father ever loved a daughter better than I love Lizette. Ah! If she *were* my daughter—if she only were the little daughter whom I lost just as I had begun to learn the *grandeur* of a father's love so many years ago

—but no, I could not love her more dearly than I do. I have tried to play a little game sometimes in which part of the play was that my little one had grown up and was she. What happiness! What pride! If only it were true! If I did not love her so, it would not tear my heart to shreds to see her sorrowing in silence. If I did not love you so I'd tell her to let you go, and make her do it, too. I'd lie to her about you and make her think that you were a scoundrel, which you're not. You're merely an abnormally developed fool. If I did not love you so I would not take the trouble to abuse you. It's a bother. It works me up and makes my hand shake worse than absinthe used to. Why don't you come over here, you great big, hulking jackass, and *marry* the only woman whom you will ever love—the only woman who will ever love you.

"I could tell you a tale about my own beginnings, John Murdoch—a tale with as bright an opening chapter as yours has had, but with final words of tragedy, as yours will have if you do not do as I tell you, and as I know your own heart tells you to. If I could only get a chance to talk to you! But I can't write it. It is a story of great happiness—lost. Of great hopes—lost. Of possibilities of joy as great as yours are—lost. Its ending is this sordid, saddened, sodden life of mine. Don't do it, boy. Don't risk it. Don't. Throw everything aside and be glad God gives to you the chance. Some day I'll tell you all about it, and then you'll know why it is that my anxiety for both of you is greater than any anxiety that I could possibly know for myself. For her sake, come. For your sake, come. For my sake, come. Your friend. KENTUCKY.

But Murdoch could not go. His new life had developed characteristics which even he had not guessed at until this crisis brought them out. With the coming of emergency, the stubborn determination which had been his father's secret of success rose uppermost. He had carefully thought out his duty to his business connections, who had placed their trust in him as they had placed it in the father who had been before him, and despite his yearnings for the little one, despite Kentucky's gloomy letters, despite the fact that hers grew short and infrequent, al-

though they never failed to breathe her love for him, he held his course. He knew that it would not be long before his business duty would release him and he could go to her, and he felt really, in his heart, that he had suffered from the separation, too, and that when he finally went to her and told her what he had to tell about the reasons for his waiting, told her what he had to tell about the unfailing faithfulness of his great love, told her, as he had resolved to tell her, that he wanted her to marry him, so that nothing should ever separate them more, that then her grief and doubting all would pass, and she would understand and say that he had done that thing which had been right for him to do.

Spring came and Kentucky wrote to him that they had gone back to Paris. Lizette, he said, was weary of everything that did not talk to her about her happy days with Murdoch in the past. She yearned so for the old surroundings that he had yielded to her pleading and installed her in the old studio again.

"I know you'll come, old man," he wrote, "when you can get that infernal conscience of yours to let your business slide, but when you see her you will be shocked. She has changed greatly in her looks and manner."

This letter had been at the very bottom of the morning's pile of mail, which always was the first business of his day. He had scarcely finished reading it when the cashier came in to tell him that before the day was over the last tangle of the Jones & Co. failure would have been straightened out and handed to him a balance-sheet which summed up the details of his work in settling the affairs of the defunct concern. It showed that through his careful management he had saved from material loss all those people who could rightfully look to him for help. This was balm to Murdoch's spirit.

The first great struggle of his business life had been creditably won.

Now he could go to her.

He felt in many ways much as he had felt that morning when he had won the Prix d'Honneur in Paris. Then he had been quietly elated. He had almost failed to under-

stand Lizette's wild exuberance of joy; now his hired cashier showed more outward signs of enthusiasm over this new victory than he did.

On that morning he had sat looking over at the swaying trees in the Gardens of the Luxembourg, quietly triumphant, silently enjoying the sensations of success. But she had danced around him, a crazed, delighted little elf, almost beside herself with joy. He told the cashier to see that no one bothered him while he examined that final balance-sheet, but when he was alone he did not think of it. Instead, he thought of her and wondered how she would feel if she were there to share this new success with him. He tried to picture her, not in the studio—that would be no place to think of victories of finance—but in a window of the solemn brown-stone mansion uptown, getting the news that he had won this fight. He could not see her there, even in his imagination. She did not fit the place. He wondered where he should find in all New York a place fit for her daintiness. But he would find one now, and go to fetch her to it. And old Kentucky—he should come too, if he would. He had been the genuine man, the real friend. He would go at once and get them both. But now, before he did another thing, he felt that he must write to her, and tell her all he had to tell. It was not a long letter that he wrote, but it said much to her—more than he had ever said before. He smiled happily as he put the seal upon it, and wondered if its contents would please that woman artist who had talked to him so frankly while she stood there in her hallway with her brush, loaded with cheap paint for worthless servants, in her hand.

One or two of the directors and other business people, who would naturally hear quickly of his business victory, came in to congratulate the young man who had won it, as his father would have won it, despite the fact that for a time he had spent his days in Paris, studying a foolish thing called Art. He was not effusive. To them he seemed, even as he had seemed to Lizette, on that other day, almost too indifferent. It occurred to many of them, as he stood there with the weary lines deepening on his

face from the effects of relaxation, that he might be so tired that he could not appreciate the taste of victory's fruit. The same old director who had slapped him on the back and told him, months before, that he ought to take the vacation which he had earned and then proposed to take, came in again, and again went through his motions.

"Well," said Murdoch, smiling gravely, "this time I am going."

He called a messenger and gave that letter to Lizette to him to mail, and then he went to work again.

It was a busy day for him. No one could see the slightest reason, now, why he should not take the short rest which the short trip he told them he had planned would give to him. He had done wonderfully well, and might go away and feel content.

He left the bank as early as he could, and as he drove up Broadway went to sleep. The strain was over, and now his weariness was overpowering. He scarcely waited for his dinner, and went early to bed to dream about Lizette and a new home for her, where she should find a place for all her daintinesses.

CHAPTER XV.

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

Murdoch woke early the next morning, feeling bright and rested. That had been rare lately. The hour at which he ordered coffee surprised his cook. He read his newspaper while he waited for it, and studied sailing lists. A steamer was to sail that very day at noon, and he wasted no time in deciding to sail with her. That leather luggage was pulled out and packed again and started downtown to the bank before he ate his breakfast. Now that he could go, he wanted to go quickly. There must be no more delays. He smiled quietly as he found himself declaring inwardly that nothing should make him wait again, that no failure, if it were of the bank's most solid customer, should keep him in New York a minute after that ship sailed. He sent hurrying messengers to call an early morning meeting of the Board to be held at the bank in time for him to get through with it and go. He wrote a few short notes to friends and hastened downtown.

His luggage reached there before he did himself, and was piled neatly and with its air of eminent brown-leather-bound respectability in a corner of his room. The meeting of the Board was held and ended before the hour for opening came. The directors all approved of his decision, and all said that he did things as his father had—quickly, when he once got started at them. They knew he needed rest and were glad to have him go.

At about the time the bank opened a clerk came in and told Murdoch that a man who refused to give his name waited outside to see him.

"I am very busy and am just going away. Ask him if his business can't be done by some one else."

"I did, sir, but he told me that he was an old friend of

yours and wished to see you personally. He would not even give his name. He is a strange looking man with a queer high hat—" and the clerk described Kentucky.

Murdoch did not wait for the end of the description. When he heard the details of the stranger's hat, he jumped up from his chair with an alacrity that room had never seen before. For an instant his heart throbbed with a genuine and delightful joy. He would be glad, indeed, to see Kentucky. But then there came a little chill and a catching of his breath. Why had Kentucky left Lizette? Had something dreadful happened just as he was ready to carry out his plans? The thought stopped him for a second at the door. Then he went out into the long corridor. Kentucky was walking slowly down it, and Murdoch paused for an instant to contemplate the old, familiar back. The clothes upon it were the ones for which Murdoch had advanced the money; but they were shabby now, and the hat was that of beams and girders. Murdoch called in a voice that startled all the staid and respectable employees of that banking house.

"Kentucky," he cried, "come here!"

Kentucky turned to meet him, and there before them all the president of the bank and the eccentric looking stranger from the Latin Quarter greeted each other with French effusiveness. They hugged and then they held each other off at arms' length and looked into each other's faces. The business of the bank stopped. It was a shock. It came very near to scandal. Nothing like it had ever happened before in all the history of that banking house. But Murdoch did not care. He pulled Kentucky into his room and shut the door. He forced him into his own chair and gave orders that he must not be disturbed. Such doings were revolutionary, and the boy backed from the room, with his eyes fixed in mute wonder on the face of his strangely changed employer.

Again the old friends shook hands and looked each other over.

"You haven't changed," said Murdoch.

"Nor you," Kentucky said, "except that you are better dressed."

"You're not," said Murdoch, smiling.

And then, with an expression of eagerness and anxiety which could not have been assumed and was balm to the faithful, puzzled soul of poor Kentucky, the banker put his hands upon the shoulders of the student, and, leaning toward him, said quickly:

"Lizette?"

"Oh, Murdoch! I'm so glad! I *am* glad! It's true, then. You *do* love her yet. You do, man, you do. Tell me so."

"I do, Kentucky; of course, I do," said Murdoch. His face now wore the puzzled look. "Why? What makes you ask? She does not doubt it, does she? You do not doubt it, do you?"

"Oh, we had both begun to doubt—or I had, anyway. You didn't come. What could we think? And, man dear, she was dying for you. I mean that. She was dying for you. I came over to find out. To see if I could find out really what the matter is. I came to take you back with me to that little girl and save her happiness. You have no right to ruin it."

He paused and looked intently at the banker. "And Murdoch, if I had found differently, I don't know what I should have done to you. And if you don't come with me, I don't know what I *shall* do."

Murdoch was filled with a great exhilaration. The love of dramatic effect which had made the conceptions of his pictures good and which had been smothered since he had returned to New York ran riot with him. He held the gravity of his face so rigidly that Kentucky would have seen the falseness of it had he not been too wrought up to stop to think.

"Why, Kentucky," Murdoch forced himself to say, as he waved his hand toward the outer office, "how can I go? Look at all this!"

Kentucky, whose face had been radiant, when he found that his old friend seemed still faithful to the past, sat, after this speech, as if frozen in the chair. Murdoch watched him, enjoying for a second what he had meant to be a joke. But as he was about to speak and undo the pleasantries, Kentucky's long, ungainly figure rose slowly,

from the chair. Its every joint stretched out. The old, familiar stoop was gone. The face which topped it wore an expression which Murdoch had never seen on it before. He watched the change with fascination. Kentucky slowly reached out for his ancient hat and placed it firmly on his head. His eyes looked over Murdoch, and beyond him. It did not seem as if they saw the walls of the dull room. There was an impressive something—it was almost majestic—in Kentucky's presence now which kept Murdoch from speaking.

Kentucky broke the silence. He did not look at Murdoch. His eyes stared into space.

"Then may the good Lord punish you as you deserve," he said. "Murder is nothing to it. God!"

The agony in his face was real. The staring eyes changed and filled with tears. More than the old stoop came back to the tall frame and shortened it. He turned to Murdoch.

"Murdoch, man, you don't mean it. You can't mean it. Think of her, Murdoch, think of her! Every day that I've been with her it has always been 'Pudgy! Pudgy! Pudgy!' Sometimes, in our talks down there in the South, I became angry at you and said harsh things. And then, poor thing, languishing away for love of you—as sweet a woman, Murdoch, as God lets live—she always made excuses for you, and told her love for you a thousand times in defending you from me. In defending you from me, the best friend that you've got, John Murdoch!

"She has said that we could not reasonably expect you to come back. That it was all wrong for us to think that you ever would come back. Art students never did come back, she said. She has even tried, John Murdoch, to put her love and yours upon the basis in my eyes of the sordid affairs of the Quarter, which you know, as well as I do, are as different from it as the blackest hole in hell is different from the brightest spot in heaven. But she has tried to do it, Murdoch, in order that I should not blame you. That beastly trip! It was a nightmare. It did not help her any. That was not what she needed. She needed you. So we went back to



THE OLD WOMAN WHO SOLD COALS

Paris, where she could sit and mope and dream of you among familiar things and places that had been common to your life together there—the life in which she lives in memory to dull the sorrow of a painful present. And so my journey is in vain! Good Lord! I cannot face her. I don't know *what to do*."

Murdoch spoke at last, and if the tears came to Kentucky's big old eyes as he stopped speaking, there were just as many in John Murdoch's when he started.

"Kentucky," he said, "I am an ass. I tried to fool you. *I am* going. Before I had any notion that you were not in Paris I had everything arranged to sail at noon to-day. Now we'll sail together. I am going to her, Kentucky, and you are going with me. We'll go to her together, old man, and then we'll all come back here to a new home, where we three will be as happy as we ever were, and happier. Now what are you going to do to me, or call upon the Powers to do?"

It was Kentucky now who could not speak. He went over to Murdoch, who had not risen. He hugged him as a bear might hug. Murdoch called a man and told him to buy another passage. For ten minutes he talked with the cashier and told him that he would look at nothing else that morning, but that he would return in six or seven weeks. Even the cashier was glad that at last Murdoch was really to take a rest. It seemed to him, as it seemed to all his associates in the bank, that the mere thought of going away had done Murdoch worlds of good, for his step, which had been heavy lately, was light; his eyes, which had been dull and tired looking, were bright; his voice, which had been sharp and peevish, was brisk and pleasant.

There were papers which had been prepared for inspection and signature before his departure. These Murdoch disposed of rapidly. His carriage was waiting. The luggage was piled on. Murdoch bundled Kentucky into the carriage, and when, after he had joined him there and the solemn servant from the Madison avenue mansion had closed the door (trying hard not to show surprise at the appearance of his master's companion), they went straight to the dock and left the luggage. They had an hour before

the steamer sailed, and they drove to the cable office and sent a message to Lizette. Both signed it. It read.

"We sail at noon for Paris and for you. Have a fire in the new stove and some ecrivisse. *Nos coeurs sont plein de toi.*

"PUDGY.

"KENTUCKY."

The last sentence of the message meant, "Our hearts are full of thee," and it was couched in the familiar French which one uses with those he loves, but not with strangers.

And, indeed, their hearts were full of her. Of nothing else they talked as they drove; of nothing else they thought as they climbed the gang-plank of the steamer. They did not see the beautiful panorama of New York harbor as the big ship ploughed through its waters. That night they sat in the smoking-room until the lights went out. They did not see the poker-players. Their only interest in the day's runs came from the fact that every revolution of the big ship's paddle wheels took them nearer to that other shore where they should find Lizette.

During the long days on the ship, sometimes when they were sitting in the smoking-room, sometimes when they were pacing the deck together—and a strangely assorted pair they looked—Kentucky told to Murdoch's ever-eager ears tales of Lizette's devotion, of her sweetness, of her unselfishness.

"One day she said to me," he said, "that it seemed to her unfair that so many good things should fall to her and so few to other girls. That was when, dear man, we looked for you almost day by day, and before your long delays had taken all the brightness out of her, as it did later."

Kentucky paused here. Murdoch could not resent the rebuke that was half-hidden in the voice of his companion.

"She was very happy," the student continued, after a moment's pause. "The very next day you sent to me that damned 'unlimited credit.' I never told her about that. I feared that its very generosity would be mistaken and make her think that she would have long, indeed, to wait for you. I merely told her that you had sent a sum of money to me, saying that you would be over soon yourself, but begging me, in the meantime, to be her banker and see

to it that she had means to get whatever things she needed. She spent mighty little of it, Murdoch. Your money never made you one whit dearer to Lizette. The only new clothes even that I could make her buy were the merest, plainest necessaries. It seemed as if she were unwilling even to throw aside the gowns in which you had seen and loved her. And that red wrapper! Do you remember that? She would *not* get a new one. 'Pudgy liked me in this,' she said to me when I urged her to go and buy another. She had darned and sewed on it until it was almost all mends and patches. But you had said you liked it, and that settled it."

"I am glad," said Murdoch, "that she saved it. We shall keep it always."

"It was because of her rigid economies that I was surprised one day, when she came and asked me if I thought you could afford to let her have a hundred francs," went on Kentucky. "If I thought it would not be wrong, she said, she hoped that I could give it to her. Again she said that it seemed unfair that she should have so much while others had so little. She wanted just a hundred francs to give away. She got it—got it quick.

"You know how the girls over there love their fancy petticoats? Those queer things, cut out on the bias and ruffled, and all that? Well, they can't always get them. They don't always have the money. Lizette used her hundred francs in buying fancy petticoats for some girls who couldn't get them for themselves. You know how the French woman loves to hold her outside skirt up in order to show the beauty of the one beneath it? Well, there were six or seven happy girls in the Quarter after she had spent her hundred francs—all holding up their outside skirts. She was one of the happy girls, although she had no new petticoat to show. The girls that did have came to the studio and showed them to her, and she was happy! It seems to me that she is always happiest when she is working for another's pleasure."

Kentucky loved her as a father might.

One night, seated in a quiet corner of the deck—it was when only two days remained to pass before they reached

the English shore—he told to Murdoch the story of his life's tragedy, and said it seemed to him as if Heaven had sent Lizette to him to take the place of the baby daughter, who, with the mother he had loved so well, lay buried in a cholera grave in a churchyard away in the south of France.

"It seems to me," he said, "that it would be easier if they had not died so dreadfully; if they had perished of something other than the plague. It would not help them any, Murdoch, if I could go and dream of them above their graves, somewhere in a quiet churchyard, where shadows lay serene and flowers bloomed above them; but it would help me. It seems to me that if I could have nursed her in her illness and held her hand as she passed into the great dark, my sorrow would be lighter. They told me that they placed the *p'tite cherie* clasped tight within her arms as if together they had gone to sleep, and only waited for the morning to awaken. I am glad that they did that. But, Murdoch! If only it had been my solemn privilege to fix them thus—the poor, dead mother and our poor, dead child with their arms about each other—it would be easier for me now. If I could only see them in my memory as they were when they were laid to rest! If I could have the selfish satisfaction of going to a separate grave and knowing that within its walls they lay alone! If I could put over them some little monument on which the story of my love was cut in lasting stone! But there they lie—my loves, my life, my hopes, ambitions, all—buried in that common grave where dozens, unknown, unreckoned and unloved, lie with them. It made it doubly hard for me, old man, to go back and find them buried in that common grave. The very day they died, they told me when I reached the place, her father—a hard, incorrigible, unforgiving man, he was—arrived there with a woman, who said she was his sister. It was a lie. He had no sister. I know what he intended. Learning that I had left them there alone, he planned to go and steal them from me. But Death took them first."

It was late at night when Kentucky told his tale of tragedy to Murdoch. They had left the smoking-room,

and were sitting on the open deck in solitude. The sky was dark and lowering, with almost all its stars obscured, but a lingering opalescent light glowed dimly beyond the drooping clouds. The ship was rolling gently. Kentucky arose, and his tall, ungainly figure, swaying to the motion of the ship, was silhouetted black against the distant radiance.

"Never may you suffer, Murdoch, as I have suffered!" he said, slowly. "Never, when it is too late, may your busy brain find bitter food for thought in tardy recognition of neglected opportunities for kindness and for loving service! Never may it be your reverie, late at night, that, if your chance had only been extended by a kindly God, you would have done this for her, or that! Never may it be your horrid fortune to reach yearning arms out into the darkness and know that she whose place was in them has forever gone, and that those arms have failed in their protection in the very hour of need! Never may it be your terror, Murdoch, to see life stretch before you blank and empty as mine has stretched in front of me! Never may existence seem so vain to you that all incentive for work and effort shall have vanished and only the dogged instinct of retaining life—dull, joyless, dreary—remain to make you live! All these sensations have been mine, John Murdoch, and may they never come to you!"

Kentucky sat down on the bench at Murdoch's side. He put his hand upon the banker's knee, and said:

"Now you know my story. Now you know why I've seemed to be interested in your doings and have bothered you with my anxieties about your life and hers. Murdoch, I love you both. Remember that. If I ever seem to meddle, remember that. If I seem to take upon my shoulders burdens which are rightly yours, and annoy you with officiousness, remember that. Remember, Murdoch, that old Kentucky, having seen his own life go to wreck and ruin, is only trying to burn signals and throw out lines to you, when he sees your own and hers approaching near the rocks. What does this banking business in New York, for which you have neglected her—you have, old man, you have neglected her—amount to? Nothing! It was

your father's wish that you should take it up, and your sense of duty to the dead has played large part in your devotion to it. Yes. Admirable. But he is dead. And she is living. You can't help or please him, now. And she is *living*—living there alone and yearning for you. Forgive me, Murdoch; but remember what I say."

"I shall. You are the best and truest friend I have, except the little one," said Murdoch.

"I think I am. At least I try to be."

Then, while the steamship's busy paddles were pounding through the waves and forcing her great bulk onward toward the other shore of that great ocean, where Lizette waited, loving them and yearning for their coming, they went below to sleep. Murdoch, to see her as the earnest, loving soul whom he should have ever with him in the future; Kentucky, to idly fancy in fleeting visions, sleep born, that that little one, long dead and lying in her silent mother's arms down in that Southern churchyard, was living still. And in his dream she came to him, and, reaching out her arms, she called him father. And when he looked to see the vision of his daughter, he smiled with happiness and saw—Lizette.

CHAPTER XVI.

LIZETTE'S PRAYER.

John Murdoch's letter reached Lizette the very day they sailed. It always made her happy to get letters from her loved one, even in these days of deep despondency and loneliness. Sometimes she sat for hours, holding a letter from him unopened in her hand, hoping against hope that it would tell her he was coming, longing to read his words of love, but fearing to, because so often there were written with them other words which told of new delays. It was evening when the postman brought it. She forgot her dinner, but sat, grave and silent with it in her hand, in one of the windows looking out upon the Gardens of the Luxembourg. It was much thinner than his letters generally were. Some of them, written on the heavy paper of the bank, had been so thick that they felt stiff and heavy in her hand, as if the envelope were full of pasteboard. But this one bent so readily that, in the sweet uncertainty of wondering what it told, she almost crumpled it. Her hand closed tightly on it, and the gum which held the flap gave way. So when she looked down at it lying in her open palm an instant later, it had opened of itself!

Before she read she saw that there were only two sheets of letter-paper. Sometimes he wrote a dozen. She wondered if he was now so very busy that he would no longer find the time to write long letters! Then she read.

"I am coming over to you," said the letter, "very soon. Just when, I cannot tell. It will be as soon as I can in honor leave my work here. I cannot stay long in Paris."

She dropped the letter to her lap and sighed. So it was only to be a little, little visit, after all—this visit she had waited for so long!

"I cannot stay long in Paris," she read again, "for my work henceforth is here."

The shock of this most startling statement would have made her stop again, if, as the tears quickly gathered in her eyes, she had not seen a few words, indistinctly, coming after it. She read them eagerly.

"But you must be here with me. My heart cries out for you and needs you. You must come with me and we must not separate again."

She stopped now, but only to wipe away the tears which came without her bidding and had no sorrow in them. She read those words again:

"You must come with me, and we must not separate again. With no base motive and without intent of wronging you, my dear one, I have done you great injustice."

Her eyes flew over the paper now as fast as her imperfect knowledge of the English words would let them.

"I realized this long ago. Just previous to the news which told me of my father's illness, I realized it, and intended then to right the wrong that I had unthinkingly and not stopping to consider, put on you. You have been ever sweet and true to me. I know that as surely as I know when the sun shines. In a blind and stumbling way I have tried to merit your great love and kindness, but in the very greatest thing of all I failed. I shall not fail again. I love you, precious one, my wee Lizette—I love you—and I ask you, beg of you as humbly as suitor ever begged, to add to the great happiness you have already given to my life by marrying me. My life seems preordained to lie here, not there in Paris, as we had hoped and planned it would. My stay at the old studio must be very short, indeed, this time. I must hurry back to go on with the work which will lie waiting for me here. But when I hurry back, come with me as my wife. I love you and I honor you. Give me the right to cherish you—to ever shelter and protect you. Marry me, my sweet, and we will not part again.

"My heart goes out to you.

"JOHN MURDOCH."

She read this letter many times. Her heart beat fast. The tears ran slowly down her cheeks. It was too great a happiness that the written words had brought to her! She held the letter to her heart and tried to realize it all. She could not. She rose and walked about the studio, softly touching little things with loving fingers. She walked from room to room. Underneath his skylight stood his

easel. She paused before it, and let her finger tips move softly up and down upon its wood, just touching it. It was his easel! In a closet opening from the studio hung his great rain coat—the very one he had worn that morning when the news came from America which carried him away from her. She softly buried her small face in it and snuggled up against it as a kitten snuggles in a rug.

Then there came the great necessity for telling some one. Of a certainty she must share her happiness with some one. It was hard to leave the studio, but it must be done. She knew of no one she could tell except the old woman who sold coals. She was a very good old woman and, while she would not understand, she must be told. Lizette wondered if in all her life the old woman who sold coals had ever ridden in a cab. That day she should. Of a verity she should.

She hurried to the shop and communicated eagerly her plan that they should drive. The old woman who sold coals could not understand such schemes. It was not closing time.

That did not matter, said Lizette. They would drive, because great happiness had come to her that day, and they would drive.

Wonderfully mystified was the old woman who sold coals, but such a chance must not be lost.

Standing in the little shop was the young man who had lodged there so many years. It was he who once had studied art, but had the ambition to paint pictures washed out of him with Seine water by John Murdoch. Lizette did not know about that matter. She partly knew the story of the affair, but Murdoch had never told her that the man whom he had ducked and who had cut him in the hip that afternoon was the lodger of the old woman who sold coals. It proved to be a pity that he had failed to tell her, but Murdoch was not a man to boast. Lizette knew the man by sight and always bowed to him when she saw him in the coal shop. She often saw him there. It was strange, indeed, that he should be so often there, but there he often was. He seemed to be good-natured this time. It may be that the old woman who sold coals had been more

willing to furnish him with money than she had been on that other past occasion. At any rate, he urged her to accept the invitation, and laughed. He told her that the air would do her good, and went himself to get a neighbor to come and watch the shop.

What a pleasant drive that was! Lizette herself gave orders to the *cocher* that no beggar should be passed without a charitable pause, and when they came to Notre Dame, she told the man to stop and wait for them while they went in to pray. He was suspicious. There are many entrances to Notre Dame and one need not go away the way one enters. It would be easy to leave him standing there all night, while they went out some other way. Lizette gave him his fare and told him he could wait or go away as best he pleased. They should return to him or to some other *cocher* before very long by that same door by which they entered.

Early in the day she had planned to buy some little luxuries. The money which she had set aside for this she dropped into the poor-box as she entered. The little old woman who sold coals was puzzled beyond expression by it all. She was glad to have the drive, but was it to end at Notre Dame, not ten minutes' walk from where she sold her coals? What could this very gay young woman have in that small head of hers, she wondered. Lizette sought out a place where the shadow of a pillar fell, and dropped slowly to her knees.

"Kneel you, also," she whispered to the old woman who sold coals. "Kneel you here by me, and ask the Holy Virgin to shelter him and keep him for me, to bring him safe and joyous to me, to make his pathways ever smooth and bright with happiness, to give me strength to care for him and cherish him and love him ever as he will ever merit love; beg Her, the Blessed One, to help me to deserve the great joy which this day has come to me and make me worthy of it; beg Her to show me how to ever think of him and not think of myself; beg Her that sorrows if they fall may fall on me and not on him; beg Her to cast me out and hate me if I ever by so little wrong or hurt him; beg Her that I may see the way to help him ever

and to never hinder him; beg Her now to let me die, while joy so great and sweet is in me, if by my living wrong or harm shall come to him in that great land across the sea, where he must work and live."

The old woman was impressed, and in her mind stopped all complaining over the brevity of the drive. She was so earnest, this little one who kneeled by her and begged the prayers of her! Surely, something wondrous must have happened to make her feel so strongly. She did not bow her head, but, instead, looked in wonder at the little one. Lizette softly put her hands across the watching eyes.

"Pray, good one, pray!" she said. "Afterwards I shall tell you why, but now pray for my Pudgy."

It was most astonishing, and it is not possible that the wonder of it left much thought for prayer in the busy head of the old woman who sold coals. But she bowed her head obediently, though not understanding in the least what it was all about.

And how *she* prayed—Lizette! In the solemn quiet of the holy place she poured her heart out to the Virgin—the only one she knew to pray to. In her mind, untutored and seeing such things very, very dimly, God Himself was far too terrible a Being for her to ask a favor of. The twisted and haphazard theology which she had picked up, crumb by crumb, because she hungered for it, made God the punisher, and Christ's mother, Mary, the beauteous and gentle Influence which begged of Him for mercy for poor mortals.

For a long time she kneeled there, bowed in silent supplication. It almost hurt her to breathe forth the intensity of her petition for the welfare of her loved one. The tears came to her eyes and ran, unheeded, down her cheeks. She knew not what she did—this little one. She knew most indefinitely whom it was she prayed to, and there were in her supplication none of the conventionalities of made-to-order prayers. But hers was real—her pleading. There was in it such simple faith as little children feel. There was in it the true devotion of complete self-abnegation. There was in it, in its ignorance, a quality that Heaven cannot always find in prayers sent up to

it. Surely, it was but right that this day she should thank the Blessed Virgin! How many joys were hers! Her happiness was boundless, scarce to be believed! How fervently she gave her thanks that hour in Notre Dame!

Can any theologian, deeply versed in the Bible and the science of theology, say that that prayer of hers was not as likely to be heard in Heaven as any smoothly-voiced petition sent up from any pulpit by any ordained priest? Can it be possible that Sunday prayers by cultured women, who tell their beads in high-priced pews with words conventionally set for them by others, are more likely to be heard of God than was this stammering, half-formed petition, breathed in sincerity and reverence to Christ's mother, by this little untaught, loving girl that day in Notre Dame? Not for herself did she ask the intervention of the Virgin, but for her Pudgy. It was all for him!

When she arose at last a light was in her eyes—a light of brilliance, such as is not often given to woman's eyes to show, and she was very happy.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE JOY OF PREPARATION.

It was a great and wondrous period for Lizette. Her half hour in Notre Dame with the old woman who sold coals had been a necessity demanded by emotion. Someone *had* to share the first uncontrollable exuberance of the joy that filled her after reading Pudgy's letter. She went back to the studio and was glad to be alone again. Her happiness in those dear old rooms seemed sacred happiness to her, such as must not be witnessed by any except the two men who were absent in America. She had not heard from dear Kentucky since he had left for New York City to see Murdoch, and she wondered if Murdoch had told him about the letter. She knew that he would be rejoiced by it.

What a dear old place the studio looked, with the daylight softened by the heavy curtains, joining with the red glare from the fire in the new stove. It was a warm day, but the fire was burning brightly. Pudgy had written to her that she must keep it burning, and she would have tolerated tortures from the heat before she would have let it die. Sometimes she even suffered from it, and had to open every window so that the cool air from outside might blow in to counteract its blazing ardor, but that she did not mind, except for the great waste of coals, for when the windows were opened wide there were the pleasant muffled noises of the Boulevard from the front, and from the side those soft, uprising shouts of the children at their play in the Gardens of the Luxembourg. She listened happily to them this morning and had gone to the open window to look out when the concierge knocked on the door. She did not hear her, so the concierge went in and handed a

small envelope to her. It was a telegram, and she tore it open eagerly. She feared for a moment that it might tell of new delays, but when she read she found she had new cause for happiness. It was that part of the message that was written in familiar French that pleased her most, of course, although the other words made definite the fact that they would sail that very day. "*Nos coeurs sont plein de toi!*" "Our hearts are full of thee!" And they had sent these words of love by ocean telegraph and linked them with those other words which told her of their start for Paris and for her. She was most happy. It seemed almost as if the message came in answer to the prayer that she had said in Notre Dame.

When she had been a small girl, working in the artificial flower shops, she had used few words and many gestures. She had had strange ways of expressing her emotions, and some of them had filled the scornful souls of other girls with merriment. Especially had they shouted in derision when, one day, she showed her joy about some matter really trifling, but to her important, by gravely hopping on one foot about the room. She had not known why this had given satisfaction to her, but it had and so she hopped. And this day, after she had read this message, almost unconsciously she gathered one foot in her down-stretched hand and hopped upon the other twice around the studio. When she realized what she was doing, she sat down suddenly upon the floor, the red wrapper spreading out around her as she sunk, and blushed and laughed, embarrassed, as if someone had seen her in her childishness. But then she rose and hopped again, defiantly, and would have hopped in spite of all, if the whole world looked on and grinned. This exhibition of her happiness attended to, she began to work.

Everything must be ready when they came. Not anywhere must there be the smallest speck of dust. In a great glow of preparation she moved about to see what might be done. It was a disappointment to her that there was so little dust. She wished for mountains of it—mountains which she might clear away, so satisfying would the hard work have been. But if there were no mountains,

there were surely specks, which must be found and cast severely out. And this was done. Each of the rugs upon the floor was beaten by the concierge under Lizette's own supervision. She might not beat the rugs herself, which was a sorrow to her, for John Murdoch had found her doing so one day and asked her not to. But surely she might look on without offense to him and see that the beating was well done, and that she did. And all the floors were scrubbed. Not that they were soiled; but of a certainty they must be scrubbed. For was not Pudgy coming home to them? Surely he must not find untidiness to greet him. And the hangings on the walls. Each had been purchased after much investigation and discussion by Pudgy and herself. Kentucky also had been with them when many of the purchases were made. Each one was taken down with consideration for the exact way in which it had hung upon the wall so that it might be put back without change, and shaken out and brushed and dusted, until not one mote could have been left lodging in it.

In the studio itself, particularly, all was made ready. The skylight was not cleaned, for Murdoch had once said that its light was better when it came softened by the dust which rose up from the street and lodged on it. There was more dust now than then there had been, but Lizette feared that to take off just the right amount of it and still leave exactly what he wanted would be too delicate a task.

Every one of his brushes was cleaned and made ready for him in little pots of water to keep them soft. For surely he would paint, at least, some little sketch in the old studio before he went back to that strange place, New York. He would paint, at least, a little sketch for *Auld Lang Syne*. And what size would he be likely to wish to make that sketch? There must be canvas ready for him. He must have no bother when he came. So she gathered up some stretchers and took them to the shop to have them covered. It was with much delight she told the dealer that M'sieu Murdoch was coming home and would wish to have canvas ready for his work. It was with great pride that she listened to the dealer when he said that Murdoch was not only a fine painter to have taken the *Prix d'Hon-*

neur (which was painted on a canvas stretched in that very shop), but that of a truth he was also a fine man in that he always paid his bills.

"Madame," the canvas seller said, "it is strange about these painters, although it is not I, who make my living from them who should speak of it. I have noticed that in general the very ones who can most beautifully paint can also the most beautifully lie. The students who come here and are stupid, so that they cannot paint at all, are those who always pay. When I hear that a man is worthless at the schools I know at once that, as a customer, he is safe. When I hear that a man does good work at the schools I begin to wonder about money. It is very strange. If one can paint, one will not pay. If one will pay, one cannot paint. M'sieu Murdoch is the exception needed to the rule to prove it."

"But," he went on, "if I could have my way, I would sell no canvas to the stupid ones. No. I would have for customers only those who can do credit to the canvases I stretch, even if they *never* paid. Think! What joy for me to go to the Salon and stand before the year's masterpiece and reflect that it was I—I—who stretched the canvas on which that masterpiece is painted. Ah! But that is reward for work. It is as if I had helped to paint the picture. Still, one must live."

"And so M'sieu Murdoch is coming back to Paris, is he? I am glad of that. Be good enough to tell him, if you please, that I shall be enraptured if he will step in to see me. I have a new sizing that I really like. I should be proud to have him try it. Do you remember a student named Kaintucky? Well, he made up for me the recipe, one day, when he could not pay a little bill. It is the fine sizing, I assure you."

Here was a new delight for Lizette's loving heart. Praise for Kentucky, too.

"M'sieu Kaintucky he comes, too, with M'sieu Murdoch," she said, delightedly. Then there came to her a dignity, for had not this canvas seller intimated that there had been times when Kentucky could not pay his bills? He must be crushed. So Lizette said:

"But that is droll. Of a certainty it is too bad that M'sieu Kaintucky should so far forget as to pay for canvas with his recipe for sizing. I am sure that now, when he comes back, if you will but present to him the bill for canvas and give him back the recipe he will most gladly pay to you the money, two times over."

Her face showed scorn and doubt of dealers.

This was an attack from a quarter which the dealer had not counted on. He hastened to correct his error.

"Pardon, madame. I did not know that M'sieu Kaintucky was the particular friend of you. I have no wish to say that M'sieu Kaintucky *could* not pay his bill. I merely had the wish to say that, as the favor to me, he permitted me to poorly pay him for the use of his sizing recipe by stretching a few small canvas for him. They were nothing, Madame—nothing. He was doing me the favor, I assure you."

And when she left the dealer he was bowing humbly and begging her to use her influence with M'sieu Murdoch, and, yes, with M'sieu Kaintucky, too, to have them buy their canvases of him in future, as they had in days gone by. In the history of the Quarter no dealer of whatsoever kind had begged humbly for Kentucky's patronage before. What she had said of Murdoch had not surprised the dealer. But the idea of Kentucky, so situated that he could really pay his bills, without ingenious effort, could pay his bills with *money*, was almost beyond belief. It would be pleasant, but it would be also startling to see Kentucky with real money in his pocket. But then, he was an American—and one never knows about Americans. Perhaps in New York City he had found a lump of gold on Broadway. Who could tell! It was so wonderful a country—that America!

Back to the studio went Lizette, with a small boy trailing after her in his blue blouse and wooden shoes, bearing the canvases upon his head. She arranged them carefully, so that Murdoch could see the clean, white squares when he should first come in, and see again that she had been thinking of and for him.

Seeing these properly deposited; having had the rugs

re-laid after being satisfied that no dust was in them; having re-arranged the hangings, so that they should look exactly as of old; having scolded the concierge for the condition of the stairs leading to the studio and watched her while she cleaned them; having made all outward things look neat and fine, she thought about John's personal belongings. There were many there which he had not taken to America. There were some clothes and hats and shoes, and there were some painters' blouses. Of a certainty, all these must be arranged.

But Lizette was tired. And there also came to her the thought, that if all these things were done to-day, there would be nothing for her to do to-morrow, and the next day, and the next, until the slow ship should bring her loved ones to her. She was very happy and the afternoon was fine. She decided that she would have a little celebration of her own and she engaged a cab. Driving up the Champs Elysee, in the little open wagon, she went into the Bois. The trees were very green, and the grass, which the caretakers were cutting, was fragrant with sweet scent. She sat down at a little table under the trees near one of the cafés, alone, and had her glass of coffee. It was one of the cafés much frequented by wedding parties and there was one there then, at late breakfast.

The wedding parties of the Bourgeoisie, in the Bois, in Paris, are worth seeing. Such gayety there is beneath the trees. How proud the bridegroom is, and how supremely shy and happy is the bride! What wondrous pastries are those which tower above the waiter's head as he brings them on, and what tremendous quantities of wine are drunk! How proud the parents are, and how long the speeches of the fathers! How blooming are the mothers, each looking at her own beloved with eyes that glance rapidly along the past of childhood and paint, in glowing pictures, the future of maturity that stretches out before! How the bride blushes and her mother bridles as the orators refer to both of them. Sometimes the old French custom of the garter is indulged in, though not often nowadays. Then some bold young man dives unexpectedly beneath the table and snatches from the bride's well-

rounded leg the circlet of elastic, which, when he emerges, he holds high above his head, while all the others, except the bride herself, shout loud with glee. Her face, of course (although she had bought that garter with great care for the selection and just this in mind), is all suffused with blushes and covered with loose fingers, through which she peeps out, shyly laughing. Then come the last speeches of the day, while the young men present divide the garter into bits and each pins a fraction of it in his buttonhole.

Lizette sat for an hour and watched the bridal parties. Those in the Bois had been the only bridal parties she had ever seen. She had watched them many times, and wondered if it would ever be her fortune to have one of her own. She had tried to imagine, in the days gone by, before she met her Pudgy, the emotions of the bride. She had tried to see in fancy the lives that had led to such emotions, and compare them with her own life. She had tried to, but she had not been able to, so she had given up the trying. The only part of all this matter of the weddings which she had been able to clearly understand had been the expressions on the faces of the brides. They were such happy faces, and she could readily understand why that should be.

But now, instead of envying the bride, she felt mildly sorry for her. Now, instead of wondering if she would ever be as happy, she knew that she would be much happier. Now, instead of wondering speculatively, whether she would ever be the centre of a party like those there in the Bois, she knew she would not. For her wedding to her Pudgy would be of quite another kind. There would be none there except her loved one and herself, and dear Kentucky. There would be no breakfast in the Bois, where all the world could look and smile amusedly, but after the ceremony, in some quiet church, they would go gravely to the office of the Mayor for the civil service, and then to the small restaurant on the Seine where they had had that charming dinner when Pudgy had furnished the dessert, when she had for the first time learned that he was rich, when for the first time he had proclaimed his love of her in strangers' presence. And then! Oh, then! Long

years of life with Pudgy would come then, years they would be when she would write her name "Madame John Murdoch," and not afterwards tear the paper up, so none could see and laugh, amused, but sign herself thus boldly in the conduct of the business matters of the happy household of her Pudgy.

When she thought of all these happinesses, she looked again at the wedding party in the Bois, and all its charm was gone. Both fathers had drunk too much, and the mothers' faces were also red from wine. The bridegroom was evidently tipsy and the bride distressed by it. The male guests, with their coarse jokes born of the bits of garter, were abhorrent to her, and the women, young and old, were common folk, who next day would start again upon their routine humdrum. They had no Pudgy. Therefore they had nothing. They were to be pitied in an indefinite way, but of a truth they were not worth longer looking at. She called her little open cab.

The drive down from the Bois was neither sad nor happy. As the sun set over the great city it played many pretty tricks along the Avenue. The shadows of the buildings on one side stretched clear across the broad street, and the many carriages seemed to jump forward for a moment as they emerged from them into the bright light at crossings, or where lawns broke the screen of high walls, close upon the street. The dust rose in thin clouds from beneath the wheels and pounding hoofs. These clouds were tinged with crimson as they drifted across the slanting sun-rays. She must, of necessity, drive slowly, in order to keep in the deliberately moving line of vehicles, and there was a restfulness about it all. She leaned back against the tarnished cushions of her hired cab and dreamed of Pudgy. It is certain that none of the ladies in fine carriages that passed her was happier than she, was looking forward with such calm content to days to come. They may have had their joys. Certainly Lizette hoped that all the world was happy. But they had no such joys as hers—for she had Pudgy. There was only one of him. The thought that there might be another message from him when she reached the studio made her

lean forward in the cab to tell the driver to go more quickly, but she fell back again, luxuriously, before she spoke. For Pudgy was already on the sea, and could not send a message.

She stopped at Notre Dame and dismissed the cab. There, on the stone floor of the cathedral, she spent another hour in silent prayer to the good Virgin for his safety.

On the slow walk from the cathedral to the studio, she stopped on the bridge to look over at the waters of the Seine. They gave her peace, for they moved slow and smooth, and they were going to the sea, on which was Pudgy. She thought now, as she stood upon that bridge, of another time when she had looked on them—when it was late at night and her soul had darkened as the sky had.

She watched the waters happily, not at all as she had looked at them that other time when they had not run slow and smooth, but fast and dreadful to her eyes, and when she had thought of leaping into them, to be borne away forever from her love, instead of loving them and breathing kisses to them to carry toward her Pudgy. What a night that had been, when she had run away from him because he stopped and talked to friends. How she had hurried from the Moulin Rouge that night and driven wildly in a cab until she reached the Quarter. How frantically she had rushed into the studio, to wildly weep because her Pudgy had forgotten for a moment that time flew fast while he was talking with old friends from America! How stealthily she had crept downstairs again, all muffled in a great cape, to hurry, secretly, to this very bridge, after stopping with Kentucky at the Dromperille, and stand here, looking at the hurrying stream, wondering if it were not best to clasp her trouble to her heart and spring with it tight held there, into them. They had been sombre, wicked, hurrying waters on that night, but now their flow was calm and peaceful. The lights upon their shores had met her gaze with wicked, leering winks that night, that urged her to jump in and end it all; but now, as twilight fell around her, they twinkled merrily, as if they knew that Pudgy was coming home to her again.

Slowly and happily she strolled down to the studio, which the great fire in the new stove would have made too warm during her absence, if she had not left every window open. She was tired. While she ate her little dinner she smiled happily. It was not many little dinners now that she would have to eat alone. How the silver shone. She had polished it for Pudgy. How the glass sparkled. She had rubbed it up for Pudgy. How the china glowed and glittered in the firelight. She smiled and played that it was laughing over Pudgy's coming.

When the charwoman came to clear away, Lizette was busy in the bedroom, arranging on the dresser for the hundredth time some sketches of herself which Pudgy always liked to have there. One dropped behind the dresser, and she called to the charwoman for help to move it out.

She picked the sketch up, and found, besides, a pair of Pudgy's socks. In her working at the contents of the drawers they must have been pushed out at the back. At any rate, they lay there, disgraceful with their punctured heels and toes. She looked them over carefully.

"Mon Dieu!" she said. "If he should come to Paris and find them so!"

Then, straightway, she seated herself by the fire in the new stove, and rocking to and fro, and singing softly, she mended them as no one but Lizette *could* mend. Finally, they were finished, and she looked them over carefully. The work was somewhat knobby, and she laughed a little at it.

"It is true that it is very badly done," she said, softly, to herself. "Alas! I cannot do the mending well, but it is of my very best, and he will know."

In the corner of the room was the small desk which Murdoch had bought for her when he was teaching her to write English. In it she kept his letters—all except that last one—that was in her bodice, near her heart. There were many of them and they were all full of love. She had read them often. Over some of them she had had to puzzle long and earnestly, when they had first come, but she had worked each separate word out in each one by now, so

that she reread them with a rapidity that disappointed her. It was such joy to read those letters. And now, she read them all so quickly that it took almost no time at all. But now there was that last and most wonderful one of all to read. Surely, she could almost spend her life in reading that one, although it was not so very long. And soon he would be here, and then there would be no more of them—no more mere letters. Instead there would be—Him! Her Pudgy!

The fire glowed bright in the new stove. The rug was soft, and her little body sank luxuriously into its long fur. The day had been a tiring one. She snuggled down contentedly as she reflected that it was one of very few which now must pass before the great one came, and, smiling softly, to herself, as she nestled, warm and lovable and happy, she fell asleep. Scattered around her were the letters from the man she loved. The darned socks, so lovingly made terrible with knots, lay close by her warm, pink face upon the rug. Somewhere out upon the ocean a big ship was throbbing with the turning of its paddle wheels. She saw it, great and majestic with its power and speed, as she lay there asleep, and heard the swishing of the water at its bow, and hovered over it and watched it lovingly.

Dawn had thrust delicate pink fingers through the interstices in the curtains before she woke. The fire in the new stove burned dimly. She rose, warm and glowing, from her dream of him. Another night had passed, and so, unthinking of anything but happiness, she began the day.

Poor little Lizette! If you had known what that day would bring to you would you have smiled and stretched your arms out toward the sunrise which smiled at you over the Gardens of the Luxembourg? Poor little Lizette! If you had known, would you have torn the leaf which marked the happy yesterday so nimbly from the calendar, and cast it with such a pretty gesture into the fire in the new stove? Poor little Lizette! Would you have pouted and made pretty scolding mouths at the shining daylight, if you had known the sorrow you would feel when darkness came? Poor little Lizette! Would your glance about the

studio have been so careless, if you had known how few the hours were which you were to pass in it? Poor little Lizette! Would you have run so eagerly to the door to get the roses which the florists' boy brought every morning, for you to place in front of Murdoch's picture of "The Parting," if you had known that ere the night fell one of those roses would rest within another woman's breast; that with the evening's fall the title of that picture would have a new and dread significance; that ere night came you would have said good-by to it and all the happy hopes of yesterday? Would you have hurried, had you known, and worked your little head and hands so hard in order to make the day seem short to you, if you had known how long—how very long—a time would pass before such happy hours could come again?

CHAPTER XVIII.

MARY MARKLEHAM'S SECRET.

Early in the morning a great thought came to Lizette. Before he started on his loving errand, Kentucky had given the key of his small room to her and asked her if she would sometimes run in to look for mail for him. They had made a joke out of the wild guess that a great check might come to him from somewhere—neither one knew where—and that she should be the first to pick it up and have it waiting for him when he came back. From the bright warmth and glow of the dear old rooms there on the Boulevard, Lizette, after she had had her coffee, hurried to Kentucky's quarters with the charwoman. Surely, Kentucky must not come home to find that she had not thought of him! Not that she would neglect one atom of her loving duty to her Pudgy to attend to the affairs of any one beside, but now that she had done all that she could think of at their own studio, ought she not to arrange some little welcome in his home for this friend, who loved them both and whom they loved so well?

She climbed the steep stairs to the top of the old building on the side street, where she had helped Kentucky earn the money to pay for those new clothes by reading to him while he made the little pictures on the slabs, and entered the old student's attic quarters. It was as it had been on those days, except for one addition. Hanging on the only perpendicular wall in all the place was a picture, covered by heavy curtains of rich, purple plush. They seemed strangely out of place amidst the dirt and the confusion. The picture was hung so that when the straggling daylight came through the small windows of the room it could get what there was of it, and two oil lamps in brackets stood ready to light the canvas when the sun

would not. The curtains were arranged with cords, which reached over to the miserable bed. This was evidently so that when, wakeful, he was lying there and dreaming of the past, he could pull the cords and see his picture—that only picture he had ever sold and which he had, with sacrifices, bought again, because he had painted it in the joyous days when his bride was with him in the south of France before the cholera came and took her and the little one.

Lizette and the charwoman cleaned the room, and while they worked Lizette's eyes often wandered toward the purple curtains. The picture which they hid was evidently a shrine to the poor student, just as Pudgy's "Parting" was a shrine to her, and her own dainty decoration of the latter picture had suggested to Kentucky some of the arrangements about this. For, above it, in a vase modeled cleverly of sculptor's clay, there were the withered fragments of some flowers—carnations. Lizette did not know, but she guessed that poor Kentucky kept them there as faithfully as she kept roses over Pudgy's "Parting." And if he did, she did not guess, but know, that it was only done through many sacrifices, for carnations, even very little bunches of them, cost much in Paris in those days.

She sent the woman out to buy some fresh carnations, and then she drew the curtains back. Kentucky had told her that some day he should show the picture to her, so she surely had the right to look at it.

It was not particularly good, but it was by no means bad, and showed a strong, bold touch, which she knew Kentucky's hand had not had since she had known him. The subject was not especially attractive—a quaint French graveyard, with a square-towered church rising in the background, and over all the quiet glory of a Southern sky at sunset. In the very foreground was a blot of fresher paint than that which formed the balance of the picture. She imagined, as she studied it, that Kentucky had tried to paint something in there at a later date than when he had finished the main picture, but finally, finding the old touch gone and the task impossible of satisfactory accomplishment, had given up and left the blot.

The girl's quick sympathy went out in a great surge to the queer old student, who was coming over seas to her with Pudgy. She had learned to love Kentucky with a strange mixture of a mother's love—for in many ways Kentucky, despite his age, was more a child than she was—and the serious affection which a daughter feels for a father tottering down the further hill of life. Many times when they had been alone together he had talked to her as gravely and as kindly as a parent might, helping her with precepts which, in his own wrecked life, he had wholly disregarded, and, best of all, showing her in many ways how best to do the thing she ever strove to do—please Pudgy.

The charwoman came back from her pleasant errand, and Lizette filled the little vase with fresh carnations. Later, she gave an order to have others sent to her each day with Pudgy's roses. When she left Kentucky's room, it was as speckless as the studio which overlooked the Gardens of the Luxembourg.

Her *dejeuner*, or second breakfast, was a very pleasant one. She was not merry. That could not be unless her Pudgy were there, too, but she was happy in anticipation of the days to come. She was pleased over what she had done at the studio of Kentucky. She pictured his surprise and smiled. She knew his eyes would fill with tears when he should see the little flowers and thought about her love, of which they were the token. How fond she was of him! She did not know it, but in Lizette's mind he acted as a foil for Murdoch. One so big, so strong, convincing and successful; the other slim and bent, so hesitating, so complete a failure. While she sat she thought much about that picture in his room. Kentucky had told her what privations and economies he had endured to buy it back. Perhaps that formless blot there in the foreground had been started for a grave. Perhaps it marked the place where his loved one and their baby were sleeping their eternal sleep when he came back from America to find them lost to him forever. Perhaps he had tried to paint their grave in after he had bought the picture back, to find that with their loss had come another—that of the

cunning of his hand. Then, she reasoned, there would be another sad significance to that grave. Not only would his loves lie buried there, in that event, but his ambition, also. Who knew what delicacies and refined vagaries of troubled thought came to that splendid but misdirected brain of his, when, alone in that attic room, his thoughts compared the self that was with the self that might have been?

After she had made one more inspection of the studio and found it perfect so far as she could make it, she sat down before the new stove. It was not so warm to-day, and she could sit there without suffering. This was comforting. She would have fried rather than have let the fire go out. How true and fine her love had been to her! His shortcomings and delays were all forgotten. He was not like other men—her Pudgy! There could be no question of *his* love and faithfulness. Their love was perfect—perfect! How different it had been from that of the few people she had known about in life, and how different from those whose loves she read about in books! So smooth and fine its course had been! To be sure, there had been the great sorrow of their separation, but what of that? It was even now almost at its end. She recalled the little storm which, for a few hours, had ruffled it. That night, at the Moulin Rouge, when Pudgy stopped to talk and stayed too long with the friends from America, rose up before her in her memory, and she laughed softly as she thought of it. She laughed very pleasantly, did Lizette, sitting there in the glow from the new stove in the studio, whose windows overlooked the Gardens of the Luxembourg. How she had hated that American girl that night! How much more would she have hated her had she known then what he told her later—that once he had thought he loved her and had thought of asking her to marry him. It had been lucky for that girl that night, she thought, that she had not known that then. If she *had* known—why, she might have been again the “tiger cat p’tite,” who had so discomfited the English student. She might have been. Who knew? She was so foolish, was Lizette! She was glad, now, that she had not known. Pudgy had told the

story to her very simply and very earnestly. He had not made light of it, but he had said to her that he was very thankful that he had come to Paris and found her—Lizette—instead.

Dear Pudgy! She could not imagine herself feeling jealous of him now, as she had known some of the women of the Quarter to feel jealous of the men they thought they loved, as the heroines of some of the novels she had read had been reported by the authors to have felt. That one lesson had been enough of jealousy for her, she thought, that night of the Moulin Rouge, those dark glances afterwards at the Seine, and the miserable hours in the studio before Pudgy, flushed and anxious from his searching of all Paris, had found her weeping there alone.

The concierge came in. She spoke in French, for she had no knowledge at all of English.

"Two ladies are coming up the stairs," she said. "They wish to see M'sieu Murdoch. I told them what you told me—that he was coming, but I tried to make them understand that he would not be here at once, but in a few days, but I could not make them understand. They speak little French. You will see them, Madame, and make them understand?"

"Two ladies coming up the stairs to see M'sieu Murdoch?" said Lizette, wondering. "Yes. I will see them and explain."

It was very strange. Such a thing had not happened in the history of the studio.

She was much disturbed. How had they found where his studio was? But no. That was an easy matter. Of course, they were Americans. The fact that the concierge had been unable to make them understand was proof of that. They never could speak French—Americans. The English—they were bad enough in that respect, but the Americans! What did they want to see her Pudgy for? Her heart was just beginning to flutter with those little pangs of jealousy which within ten minutes she had assured herself should never make it burn again. This made her angry and she tried to stop it, but she could not. She hurried into her room to take off the wrapper of rich

red and put on something more conventional. While she was there dressing, she heard through the curtains the rich rustle of incoming silks and some talk in English. She stopped to listen. She knew exactly what the visitors did, although she could not see them. She knew that one had seated herself with a sigh of comfort after climbing the stairs, and that the other was standing looking at her, smiling.

"You always drop into the very first chair here in Paris, Auntie," said the standing one. "I am sure that that one over by the window is more comfortable."

"My dear," was the reply, "these French stairs always wear me out. They make their rooms so high in Paris that their stairs are interminable. I'm always glad to get anything to sit on after a flight of them. I hope he's here, after all the work we've had to get here. I haven't the least idea what that poor woman was jabbering about down stairs. He didn't *say* he'd be here now."

"He said he was coming over as soon as he could," was the response, "and you know the summer is the dull time in banking houses. What a *lovely* place he has here! And look at it! He must be here. No servant would ever keep it up like this if he were not. I should think he *would* be sorry to give all this up to be a tiresome banker in New York. But I suppose that when his father died, he *had* to do it."

"I can't imagine him an artist," said the elder woman. "He seems so staid and practical and earnest. He is not at all what one imagines a young man who has studied art in Paris to be like. They are all so wildly dissipated over here, and wicked and all that! But I can't imagine John Murdoch dissipating."

"You can't imagine the John Murdoch *we* know painting pictures, can you, Auntie?" asked the girl. "But there is another one—a different John Murdoch. Sometimes I have caught a glimpse of that other one."

"They say that he is very matter-of-fact and business-like at the bank," remarked the aunt. "And, after that Jones & Co. affair, you know how he took hold and saved the creditors when everybody thought there was no hope!"

The little one behind the curtain drunk this in. It seemed wrong to her that strangers should invade the rooms which she had not wanted any one to see until her Pudgy looked at them himself, but if people came it was well that they should be folk who had good things to say of him. She did not realize that she was eaves-dropping. Perhaps she was not. Is it not excusable for one to hear what other people say in one's own home? And she was glad to hear them, if they must be there, praise Pudgy while they tarried.

"I wonder if he'll be long in coming," said the elder one—the one the other had spoken to as "Auntie." "I hope not," she went on. "I've *so* much to do to-day. Won't he be surprised to see us, though? It's all right for me to bring you here in Paris. That's the charm in Paris—its unconventionality. I suppose that we *might* have sent a note to him and had him call at the hotel, but it's so much more in the spirit of the place, especially the Latin Quarter, for us to stop and call on *him*. As soon as I can get my breath I'm going to look around. Last time we were in Paris—you remember—we met him at the Moulin Rouge. I believe that it is because we can do dreadful things and go to dreadful places here without *being* dreadful, that we Americans like so much to come here."

The little one behind the curtains gave a tiny gasp. So these were the American ladies who had delayed him that dreadful night when she had fled and looked so darkly at the Seine in passing. And that one—the younger one there—must be she whom for a time he had thought of marrying. She must study that girl carefully, while she had a chance, now, for when Pudgy had spoken about her he had said that she was really a splendid girl. She remembered the intonation of his voice in saying it. Lizette never hoped to be a splendid girl. She only wanted to be all in all to Pudgy. That was quite enough. But she would observe the other girl who was; she would study her from behind the portiere there. Perhaps she might make some mental notes for future reference. She could see her plainly, now. She was tall and lithe—that girl in there—and was beautifully gowned. Not like a

French woman, the least tiny bit, but very simply, very richly. She must be rich, that girl, and she, Lizette, was poor. That did not matter, though, for Pudgy loved Lizette. He did not love this rich girl. As Lizette looked, the other lounged around the room, going slowly to the window. She was very graceful. She was all curves, that girl in there—long, splendid curves—and almost as tall as Pudgy, Lizette reflected, as she watched her closely from behind the curtain.

"Why don't you marry him, my dear?" asked the elder woman.

The girl at the window did not even turn. She answered musingly and lazily:

"Why! One good reason is that he has never asked me to and never will."

The question had amazed Lizette and made her gasp. Wild horses could not have torn her from her place after that question had been asked. Up to that instant, she had intended to watch them for a little second, and then go in and make them understand their error, that Mudroch was not expected momentarily, but that he was on the sea and would be there in a day or two. Now she could not move at all. That tall girl at the window, so self-possessed, so calm—she was of a verity the one! Ah-h-h! She could not go. She must look at her. Of a certainty he had not asked her, and never would. He loved Lizette.

"Would you have married him if he *had* asked you?" persisted the aunt.

"Oh, Auntie! What a question!" said the tall girl. "How does one know what one would do if some perfectly impossible other thing should happen?"

"Why impossible?"

"I think," said the tall girl, slowly, "I think that he loves some one else, and that is why it is 'impossible.'"

She turned now so that she half faced her aunt, and wholly faced Lizette. The little one behind the curtain noiselessly drew back a bit, so that the light shining through the curtains should not strike her eyes and make them glitter, thus telling tales of her. The American was very splendid as she turned. Her beauty almost made Lizette

cry out. It was regal. Lizette's very heart hurt as she looked at it, but it jumped out toward Pudgy at the same time, for had he not chosen her—Lizette—and passed this splendid creature by? She drank her beauty in with all her eyes and breathed quickly.

The elder woman was persistent.

"But you would marry him if he should ask you now?" she asked.

The tall girl made no reply at first. She walked to a front window and looked down at the Boulevard. For a moment she stood there with her face invisible to the watching one. She was close by Lizette's small desk and laid a careless hand upon it. She did not know the contents of that desk, Lizette thought, triumphantly. She did not know about the letters from John Murdoch that were hidden there—letters to his sweetheart, who waited for him in Paris. Oh, no! She knew not a thing of them! And that last one! If she could see the others she would see from them that he could never and never would *love* anyone except Lizette. If she could see that last one—most wonderful of all—she would see that he would marry no one except Lizette—Lizette behind the curtains, who was watching her.

After a moment the aunt went on. Lizette thought that if she had been the tall girl she would have wished to strangle the old woman.

"It seems to me," the aunt said, "that nothing could be better. I shall tell you this—here in his studio, before he comes. You know he cares for you."

"Auntie!" the tall girl said in protest, "please!"

There was a little something in her voice which tried to find Lizette's heart as she listened, but did not, quite.

"Why, my dear," said her aunt, "if you can't talk of these things with me, whom can you talk them over with?"

"I don't wish to talk of them with anyone," the tall girl said.

"I believe," said the aunt, "that I recognize the symptoms. I believe you *love* him, Mary."

"So her name is Mary," thought the little one behind the curtain. "That was the name."

"You certainly were good friends before he came to Paris," said the aunt. "I remember that you went to commencement when he graduated. I ought to remember it. I had to go with you and it nearly wore me out."

"I knew other boys who graduated that same year," the girl said. "I don't see why you should say that I went especially because *he* graduated."

"Did you never correspond after he came to Paris?" asked the aunt.

"Yes. But that was years ago," the tall girl answered. "What in the world is the use of talking of it now?"

"Who stopped the letter writing?" asked the aunt.

The tall girl hesitated for a moment. She went to another window and fingered the curtain nervously, as she paused.

"He did," she said, finally. She added, as if in defense of him, "but there was no reason why he should not. They were simply letters that we wrote. There was never any hint of anything but friendship in them. I didn't blame him then and I don't blame him now. I don't see why you should. He was over here, working hard and deeply interested in his painting. There never had been any single word of anything but friendship—a kind of grown-up boy and girl friendship between us. I don't see why you should blame him."

"I'm not blaming him; I'm only asking," said the aunt.

"John Murdoch is the finest man I ever knew," the girl said, slowly. "Yes. I was in love with him. There was no need for you to drag it out of me. You knew it then, and you had not forgotten, but he was not in love with me and—there is nothing more to say."

She went over to the curtains behind which "Parting" hung.

"Oh, see the lovely roses!" she exclaimed. "I wonder what there is behind the curtains."

Lizette was in an agony. Her lips set tightly and her hands clenched. She almost feared that if that other girl who loved John Murdoch should draw the curtains that hung over "Parting" she should run in and spring at her. But she did not, for the tall girl drew them softly—almost

with reverence—and Lizette's anger died away. The situation gave her a strange pleasure which she knew was wrong. Now this other woman, who only knew John Murdoch as a banker, would see his picture and would have cause to mourn. She would know when she saw his picture, what an *artist* she had lost! She thought that she had lost a mere commercial man—a banker. Bah! Who cared for bankers? Americans, perhaps, but not Lizette. And now that other girl would know, when she looked on Pudgy's picture, that she had lost an artist.

Lizette strained forward so in watching that she almost made the portieres move, but she need not have worried if she had. The aunt was absorbed in watching the tall girl before the picture and the tall girl was slowly, slowly, drawing back the curtains. She was very beautiful, of a certainty, that tall girl. Every line was grace and her face was lovely, too, in spite of its drawn, strained look of pain. That look of pain was certainly upon it. Lizette imagined that that face must generally be calm and placid. But now, as the curtains slowly parted from before the picture that the man she loved and could not have had painted, it was not placid. The little one behind the portiere knew that if her own breath was coming quick and sharp as she looked on, the bosom of that other girl, in there, heaved, too. She knew that if the color was blazing, unseen, in her cheeks, the tall girl's face was also flushing painfully. She knew that if her hand was rigid with emotion, the tall girl's trembled. For she saw the curtains there before the picture shake and quiver in her hold as she drew them slowly back.

When the tall girl saw the picture she retreated a few steps with a little gasp of admiration.

"It is beautiful!" she said.

Her aunt had risen, and confirmed her.

"Yes, it is beautiful."

This was grateful to Lizette. If this tall girl, who loved John Murdoch and dared to try to find him at his studio, must persist in loving him when he was hers—Lizette's—let her know that she had reason to respect his art. It was beautiful—that picture. It was beautiful. Lizette en-

joyed watching the tall girl as she looked at it and let the true beauty of it sink into her, and then she longed to rush in and say to her that it was she—Lizette—who had inspired it; that it was she—Lizette—who had posed for it; that it was she—Lizette—to whom it had been given by the artist who would not sell a picture; that it was she who kept the roses fresh above it, and loved it, and almost prayed to it. She wanted to hurry in and tell the tall girl that there was no hope for her—the tall girl. She wanted to tell her that it was she—Lizette—whom Murdoch loved and whom he had asked to marry him. It seemed to her that she would like to read that letter to the tall girl—that letter in which John Murdoch had said to her—Lizette—that he should come and take her back to New York City, where the tall girl lived and where she had, no doubt, schemed to get him for herself.

For a moment Lizette wished to hurt the tall girl, to tear her smooth, reposeful face with small, pink fingernails, and make her cry out because of pain. But then the tall girl turned, and when she turned Lizette could see her face quite plainly. It was a pleasant face, and now there was a look of agony upon it which penetrated to the depths of Lizette's heart, as surely as those other and less admirable emotions had rushed up to her head a moment since. There was no possibility of doubt. The tall girl loved John Murdoch. It was real love. Lizette almost shivered as she realized that the tall girl's love was much the same as hers, with the great and crushing difference that it was hopeless. Poor tall girl. She did not wish to scratch her any more, not after she had seen her turn away from Pudgy's "Parting" with that look of pain upon her face and that gesture of despair. The thought rushed through her mind that she would like to run and throw her arms around the tall girl's neck and comfort her. The tense muscles of the little girl behind the portieres relaxed. Her head dropped forward, and she looked out, pitying, with upturned eyes. She watched the tall girl turn away from "Parting," and was very, very sorry for her.

The aunt was chattering. She was saying that the

picture was, really, very good. Bah, what an aunt! And what a thing to say of "Parting." But when the aunt, too, saw the tall girl's face and noted that the tears were running down its cheeks, she stopped her chattering, and only said:

"Why, my poor girl. Forgive me. I did not know you cared so much."

The tall girl shook her head bravely and looked her aunt full in the face as she wiped away her tears. She said:

"You see, I do care, Auntie. I did not mean that anyone should know. Please don't let's talk about it. It is very hard for me. It's silly—for he does not even think of me at all. When he left America to come here first, I thought—or rather hoped—he did. When we met him here in Paris—you know that night—I knew he did not. If he had ever loved me, he had stopped before that night. I could tell. I knew that I was not mistaken. Either he had found some other girl to love, or else, in the development which came here, with his work, he had passed over and beyond me. I do not know. But I saw then that if he had ever loved me, he had stopped. I shall get over it, of course. We women *have* to. We cannot speak. We cannot tell our love. We must wait and wait until the other loves, and comes to us and tells us. It doesn't seem quite fair. We can do nothing to show a man. We must always wait for him.

"Not," she added, hastily, "that I could do such a thing as to tell him, or ever would, but it does not seem quite fair."

She took her parasol, which she had leaned against a chair while she was drawing back the curtains, and tapped her toes with it while she went on with downcast eyes.

"Only a little while after his father's death, I met him while I was driving in the park. I asked him to get in with me. I had expected to find you at the Donnellsons, you know, but got word there that you had gone on to Mrs. Frazer's. So I was driving up alone to get you. He drove with me to the exit from the Park, and I watched him and what he said, oh, very closely. He was in a great hurry to get back to Paris, he told me. He said it seemed

to him as if the powers of earth and air conspired to keep him from going back to Paris. He said that every time he planned to go some new thing would turn up to hold him back. It was just at the time of the big Jones failure, you know, and he was looking dreadfully tired and jaded, but he said that just as soon as he could possibly get things arranged so that it would not hurt any interests but his own to go, he should start, and that nothing should stop him then.

"I asked him why he was so anxious to get back here, but he did not tell me. I asked him if he intended to take up his art again, or if he intended ever to give up the business in New York at which he had been so successful. He said he did not know. He said the painting was very dear to him, but that he had learned to love the other business, too. I asked him if he should stay long in Paris, and again he said he did not know. There was something in the way he spoke that made me look up sharply at him. I had been looking at the trees. He seemed confused. It is hard to think of him as blushing and embarrassed, but he was both then, and then I knew."

"Knew what? Was that all, Mary?" asked the aunt.

"No, not quite," the tall girl answered. "It was not quite all. I asked him if, when he came back to New York again, as, of course, he would come back, some time, he should bring with him anyone.

"'Yes,' he said. 'I have a very dear friend there named Kentucky. I shall bring him back, if he will come. He is getting old and I want him to have rest and comfort before the end comes for him. And, besides, it will give me rest and comfort to have him with me.'

"Oh, I remember every word he said," the tall girl said. "And then I asked, 'Is that all? Shall you bring back only your old artist chum?'

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"I tried to be gay and to rally him a little, but I did it very badly. He did not know it, though, and that's a comfort. I could see by his face that he was so busy thinking of something or someone far away that he did not at that moment see the Park or me, or even realize, for the instant,

that he was driving with me. There was an expression on his face that I would give the world if it would wear when I was absent and he thought of me. He did not answer and I did not ask him any more. I knew. John Murdoch is in love, Auntie, and he is coming over here to get the girl he loves and take her back with him."

The tall girl stood facing her aunt with blazing face and eyes made brilliant by the tears in them.

"I love him! Yes, I love him!" she said, almost defiantly. "I have told you about it because I could not help telling someone about it. You did not force my confidence. It was this place and these things—all his—that made me tell. I love them all. I love everything that's his or that he loves—except—except that other woman. I am glad I told you, though. It has relieved me. I shall try to get over it. I don't know why I love him. I have really seen very little of him of late years, but I do love him. I believe that he is the most genuine man I ever met. He couldn't lie. He couldn't cheat. One cannot say that of many men—or many women. He is a real man—and that is why I love him. He is a true man—and that is why I love him. He is a genius of no ordinary kind—look at this picture and what was said about it by the folk that know, and then look at that other and so different work at which he has won success—and that is why I love him!"

She shook her head again to shake away the tears. She smiled bravely at her aunt.

"Let us go, now, Auntie," she said. "You see what I am doing. I am crying. I should not want him to come here and find me crying. It has humiliated me to tell you even. I should not want to have him know."

And as she looked at her aunt with her big eyes full of tears, but with her head thrown bravely back, Lizette, who was watching her unseen, gasped in admiration of her, in admiration of this tall girl whom Pudgy did not love because he loved—Lizette! Why should Murdoch care for her, she asked herself in real humility, when this splendid tall girl loved him? It was very strange, and the tall girl's pain was pitiful. Lizette was very sorry for her.

The aunt was not unsympathetic, either, after all, for she went to the tall girl with her arms out and took her into them, and pulled her head down to her shoulder and said again that she was very sorry. So they stood there for a moment—that tall girl and the aunt—the tall girl from America who loved John Murdoch, but whom John Murdoch did not love because he loved—Lizette.

When the tall girl lifted up her head she sobbed. She had wholly lost her self control.

"And it is so strange, Auntie," she said, brokenly. "I cannot think of him as married to anyone but me. But I earnestly wish him every good. It does not anger me—his loving someone else. I only hope and pray that she he loves is worthy of him and will make him happy. That is true, Auntie, very true. I cannot feel angry at him and I cannot hate her, somehow. Of course, I do not know her, but I cannot think of her except to hope that she will prove worthy of a good man's love and make him very happy."

This was a strange thing for the tall girl to say, thought Lizette. It seemed to her, listening there behind the curtain, that it was not natural, but she liked her none the less for it.

"I hope," said the aunt, less pleasantly, "that while he has been here in Paris he has not become entangled with any woman who is unworthy of him. I know little of these French women, but what I do know is not greatly to their credit. I hope that he has not become entangled with someone who will harm him, who will drag him down. Artists are strange people. You know Charles Fosdyck? His mother was one of my friends. He married a model over here and was cast off for it by his father and thrown out by everyone. I hope John Murdoch is not such a fool as that. I hope he did not, in the first place, come over here to find his ruin, and if he did I hope that he will not return to claim it and to take it back with him."

There was more than a touch of bitterness in the old woman's tone. It made Lizette flush up and burn and want to scream at her.

"I thought Mrs. Fosdyck an attractive woman. I only

saw her once," said the tall girl. She was gathering her skirts to go away. "I have always understood that they are happy there together. She seemed wrapped up in him and he in her."

"I guess they love each other," said the older woman, "but it has been his ruin, just the same. Silly, youthful romance doesn't wear well, dear. No one would receive her. Of course, he could not be received without her. His acquaintances fell away from him and he has quite gone down the hill. It was his ruin, sure enough. I hope your Murdoch will do nothing of that kind."

The tall girl smiled a trifle, although the sobs still rose and made her catch her breath. It was the first real smile her face had shown since Lizette had been watching her. When she had looked around the place at first there had been an eager, interested look, a pleased look, as she saw the place the man she loved had lived in for so long, but this was the first real smile. It was not a smile of happiness. It was a smile of confidence.

"John Murdoch will do nothing of that sort," she said. "He is too true a man to love a woman who is not worthy of his love. I am sure of that. Certain. He is too true a man to marry any but a true woman. I shall get over my distress some day, and then I am sure that I shall be glad to make his wife my friend. At first I could not bear it, but by and by I shall be able to, and I know that the woman whom he finds good enough to marry will be good enough to be my friend."

"You are a strange girl," said her aunt. "I hope so."

She started toward the door.

In a second they had passed so far that Lizette, from her place behind the curtain, could not see them. She waited anxiously to hear the door close so that she might venture out. But she heard the tall girl say:

"You go on, Auntie. I have dropped my handkerchief. I will overtake you in a moment."

And she came back into the room.

The handkerchief was lying almost before the picture. The tall girl had not closed the curtains. She picked up the little square of cloth, and then slowly—very slowly—

closed the curtains over "Parting." She gazed intently at the picture as the curtains shut on it. She was not crying now. After she had closed the curtains, Lizette's intense eyes saw her go once around the studio and touch the chairs and table and her desk—Lizette's—with lingering fingers, softly, as if she said, good-by. Again she stopped in front of the closed curtains which covered "Parting." She looked for a moment at the roses over it and, standing on her tip-toes, reached up and took one quickly. With it in her hand she gave a hasty, guilty glance around. All her dignity was gone now. She took the posy in her arms and hugged it hungrily. Her aunt called from the top of the stairway. The tall girl loosened the buttons of her bodice and thrust the rose in, thorns and all, and, closing the buttons as she went, ran out.

Lizette listened until she heard the door close. Then she went softly to the window. She saw them get into their open cab and drive away. She watched them from the window, with the curtains held before her, screening her, until the last possibility of identifying their little vehicle in the crowd of others on the Boulevard had vanished.

CHAPTER XIX.

LIZETTE SEEKS AN ANSWER.

In the first excitement of their departure and her release from her strained position behind the curtains, Lizette did not think very deeply or very clearly. It was a distinct relief to her to watch the disappearance of their cab as it became indistinguishable among the crowd of vehicles upon the old Boul' Miche'. They had had no right to come to the studio in the first place, she argued. Was that the way of women in that far away New York, where people were so very careful what they did? Of a certainty it was Pudgy's studio, and, of course, was free to Pudgy's friends. She made this concession quickly in her mind. It was almost an apology to Pudgy. But this tall girl—this tall girl who dared to love him—she had had no right to come. He had not invited her. One of the visitors who had gone had brought into the studio a faint, sweet odor of violets. Lizette threw all the windows open with sudden vehemence, so that the dainty fragrance might be blown away. The perfume of her roses over "Parting" was the only smell of flowers which had the right to harbor there.

She walked about the studio. Lying by the door was something. The tall girl had dropped her handkerchief again. She must have dropped it while she was crowding that stolen rose into her bodice. Lizette stooped and almost touched it with her fingers. Then she straightened up, and, going to the rack by the new stove, took from it a pair of small, brass tongs. With them she picked up the little square of cloth and started with it to put it in the stove. She did not do it. The thought of the distress which had so plainly shown upon the tall girl's face prevented her. For a moment she stood with it, fluttering

white and limp before the door of the new stove. It seemed so helpless! It was like the tall girl. She was helpless, too. And hopeless. Lizette did not touch the handkerchief with her fingers, but she gently let it flutter from the tongs and rest upon the mantel back of the new stove.

She sat down in a chair before the fire and thought. Her anger died away against her will. Her emotions were conflicting. She tried to keep her hatred for the tall girl burning in her heart, but could not. The memory of those tears came to her and quenched the fire of anger in her heart as tears, since humanity began to shed them, have quenched many fires of anger. She brought the memory of the tall girl's sobs back to her mind and tried to dwell on it in triumph, but she could not. She tried to rejoice because the tall girl's face had flushed and her eyes reddened with the weeping, but she could not. She tried to wish the tall girl ill, and could not. She could only feel sorry for her, very sorry for the tall girl. Indeed, but she had cause to weep, that tall girl! She tried to imagine herself in the other's place—to guess how she would feel if she loved Pudgy and Pudgy loved the tall girl. It was too terrible to think of. It made her choke. She reflected that in a case like that she must most certainly go mad. The tall girl was very beautiful, very beautiful. There could be no more doubt of that than that she loved John Murdoch. And she loved him—that girl of grace and elegance and beauty loved him. Her face would have revealed it to Lizette, even if her words had not confessed it, never dreaming that Lizette was listening, to her aunt. But John Murdoch did not love the tall girl. He loved Lizette—Lizette, who waited for him there to welcome him. That was strange, but it was wonderfully fine. She was beautiful, and most likely rich. All Americans, it seemed, were rich, except Kentucky. It was most wonderful that Pudgy should love his small Lizette when he could have the tall girl for the asking.

Lizette did not grudge the rose to her. At first when she had seen her thrust it out of sight into her bodice, she had hoped the thorns on it would hurt her. Now she

hoped that they would not. There already was so much pain in that bosom. The tall girl had thought it was Pudgy's rose. Perhaps it had been in her mind that he himself had placed it there above his "Parting." But it was not Pudgy's rose, because he had not come as yet to claim it. He did not even know about the roses which were over "Parting." It had been Lizette's rose which the tall girl had taken and placed within her bosom. She would weep over it when she reached the room at her hotel and kiss it. The tall girl would kiss and mumble over Lizette's rose. It almost seemed, as if in common decency, she ought to run and tell her not to. But that would put too great humiliation on her. Lizette was very sorry for the tall girl when she thought of that.

But the aunt! Lizette had no kind feelings for the aunt. She was a most unpleasant and violent old woman. She had spoken about Fosdyck. Lizette had heard of Fosdyck. He had been very popular in the Quarter. He had not been a particularly good artist, but he had been popular in the Quarter and he had had much money. Lizette remembered her dimly. She was a beautiful woman—Fosdyck's wife—and the aunt had said they loved each other. But she had also said that in marrying her Fosdyck had married ruin. If they loved each other, why had the marriage ruined Fosdyck? She wondered why.

Then there came to her an awful thought. Would Pudgy, if he married her—Lizette—and took her back to New York City with him, be ruined by it as Fosdyck had been by his marriage? Was it possible that she—Lizette—could ruin Pudgy? It had ruined Fosdyck. Could it also ruin Pudgy? Was New York such a cold and cruel place as that? A new thought grew within her and it made her shiver as with cold. Was this strange talk of the two women sent to her in answer to her prayer? A-h-h-h! She shuddered. The dread was in her which comes to superstitious people when they think they see a sign. Her eyes dilated and she felt a chilling thrill as if the socket of her heart were emptying. She sank with involuntarily loosened muscles to the floor and stared before her as if she saw some terror in the air.

That night at the Domperille, when Lizette had gently linked her arm and life to Murdoch's, she had had no knowledge of wrong-doing. But now—deep down in her heart—she knew. It was that that made this new thought dreadful to her. It was that that made the superstition that this talk of the old woman's might be an awful answer to her prayer, grow coldly, like a tree of ice, within her breast. Those days, when she had read the Bible to Kentucky and talked to him about it, she had, without realization, learned just enough so that now the twisted thoughts came back to her with many misinterpretations and dread meanings. Her other reading with Murdoch, when she had struggled with the English to please him and to understand him, had taught her more; and in these things, too, she saw new meanings—dreadful meanings—as she huddled on the floor in horror at the prospect which opened now before her dazed and startled mind. When once the knowledge had begun to grow, it had gathered as a rolling snowball gathers, and now, with these new and awful misinterpretations of it, it threatened to overwhelm her. Often painful thoughts had come to her, but she had pushed them back, unwilling to give them lodgment in her mind. Who has not struggled to put away unpleasant truths? But now they rushed upon her like a flood. The sluiceway had been opened by what the aunt had said, and they rushed through it in a flood. She tried to stop their coming, but she could not. She hurried, trembling, about the studio, doing some of those small things which had ever been absorbing and brought such pleasure to her, but they did not absorb or bring pleasure to her now. She went over into the Gardens of the Luxembourg, but the playing children could not turn the course of her reflections.

She went back to the old studio and reread Murdoch's letter, that one which said so much on two small sheets of paper. But its sweetness was embittered. Perhaps in opening to her the door of happiness he might be closing it upon himself. Perhaps that was what the Virgin had meant to warn her of in the visit of the women to the studio. Perhaps her prayers for guidance had been an-

swered with an answer that bade her rend her life in twain, destroy it, trample on the joy of it, that she might save him from himself. Ever as she read its words—those words so dear to her—that woman's voice, which said that Fosdyck was a ruined man and hoped that Murdoch would not tempt like certainty of ruin, troubled her.

"I hope he has not become entangled with some one who will harm him—some one who will drag him down," the aunt had said.

Would it harm him? Would it drag him down to take her back with him to New York City? Had she been so very wicked in her love for him that that very love would compass his destruction? Was this hint an answer from the Virgin?

She could not put the thoughts away from her. They were persistent in their clamor to be heard. Oh, why had that old woman come to make her suffer so? Slowly, a conviction was growing in her mind, a thought so grim and terrible that it made her crouch in agony.

She must not ruin Pudgy.

If it were possible that harm should come to him through taking her to New York City, she must never go. It were better, it were happier that she should die than that she should take ruin to her Pudgy. It was plain that marriage did not save men from such ruin, for the aunt had said that Fosdyck had been ruined, although he loved his wife and she loved him, and they were married hard and fast as laws of Church and State could bind them. She must think about this awful matter. She must find out what to do. Whatever that might be, it must not be that she should take the ruin to her Pudgy. Not if it tore her heart from out her bosom and left it, rent and bleeding, in a wilderness of loneliness. She must think. She must take counsel. Oh, how she wished for old Kentucky at this crisis!

She quickly dressed and went to Notre Dame again. Again she knelt there on the stones. Again she lifted up her heart in supplication to the Blessed Virgin. Her prayers were still for Pudgy, but their point of plea was changed. She did not ask the Holy Virgin to guard him

from the dangers of the sea. She begged to know if, in her own, sweet, loving self, a greater danger lurked than in the waves. This prayer was not of thanks, but supplication. She begged for definite interpretation. She asked the Virgin how she might deport herself to keep all trouble from her Pudgy. She begged Christ's holy mother to tell her if, by marrying him and going back with him, she should take ruin to him. The wording of that other prayer was in her memory—that happy prayer, poured out amidst the sweet excitement of the coming of his letter, that prayer which she had tried to get the old woman who sold coals to say also for him.

Was it possible, she asked, that the shelter which he needed was shelter from her love? What a bitter, biting thought!

She had begged the Blessed Virgin to show her how to ever think of him and not think of herself. Would the truest thought of him, the truest self-forgetfulness, be that which bade her go away from him, so that by cleaving to him she might not shame and injure him before the world?

She had begged of her that sorrows, if they fell, might fall on her and not on him. Was it true that by accepting this supremest of all sorrows—separation—she might most surely save him sadness in the days to come? She had begged to be cast out and hated if she ever, in the slightest, wronged or hurt him. Was it possible that by going to America with him as his wife she would be most deeply wronging him, most irretrievably doing him an injury? Had the words of the old woman been spoken in her hearing as a warning of this possibility? She had begged that death might come while joy so great and sweet was in her if, by her living, wrong or harm should come to him. Was it true that it were better for him that she died before he came to claim her as his wife? Was it true that if they married it might spoil his life across the sea? Had the Virgin told her this by sending the old woman?

As she knelt the great sobs shook her so that those who were nearby looked on and pitied her. She did not know that they were looking. The whole world's gaze would not

have changed the current of her thoughts. She was too deeply weighted by her agony of fear that through her love for Murdoch she should harm him.

So she knelt and prayed and asked these questions of the Virgin many times. But there came no answer to her.

In that dim religion which she had built from shreds and fragments of the truth was the belief that answer to the praying soul in real distress was likely to come quick and straight from Heaven.

But no such answer came to her.

She told the Blessed Virgin what her case was, and confided in her with a sweet simplicity that if she must go away and leave her Pudgy for his own salvation, then the going must be now, that it was in her heart that if she waited until after he had come to her, her strength would surely fail.

Imploring, in an agony, she asked an answer, but none came.

What she really expected, whether she looked for a material demonstration, or some soul-convincing inward thrill, unseen, unheard, she did not know herself. But nothing came.

Finally, weeping noiselessly and with many little catchings of the breath, she started to go out. In the very entrance to the cathedral, where the gloom of the great pillars lay blackest on the stones, she met the young man who was so often at the shop of the old woman who sold coals.

He had given up the study of art and earned that part of his living which was not provided by the old woman who sold coals by copying work in the libraries. But he still posed as a divinity student. In his dress he imitated the garb of the Church and he was frequently to be seen about the great churches, the ones most frequently visited by sight-seeing strangers.

Lizette knew this young man through seeing him so often in the shop of the old woman who sold coals. At once the thought occurred to her that he might help her. She hardly dared to go to a regular priest with her tragedy, so great to her, but so small in a world of tragedies. But this student! Surely, he could help her; at least, he could

advise where to seek help. She turned the matter over in her mind as she followed him along the street, and when he paused, leaning on the wall that runs alongside the river, she approached timidly and addressed him. He bowed conventionally.

"Father, will you help me?" she asked.

"I am not a priest," he answered, adding, to keep up the pretence which had become a habit with him, "though I hope to become one. But I shall be very glad to be of help to you if I can. Only, if it is confession which you wish to make, the church would be a better place and there are always priests there waiting!"

"No, not confession," said the small one, "but I have much to ask."

"Go on."

She did not tell him who she was, but poured her story out in broken sentences and struggling words. He really did not listen closely. Much of what she said was almost incoherent. Much more he did not understand, because she did not stop to detail surrounding circumstances. But finally, he gathered enough of what she meant to understand in part the worry of her heart. Still, he did not understand who it was that she would save from harm. He did not recognize her yet. He merely thought that she was a sentimental, worried French girl, almost hysterical. Such mental mix-ups are not rare. She did not tell him of the visit of the women. She did not tell him that she feared their visit came in answer to her prayers.

"Your sin has been no greater than his sin," he said, when she paused at the end of her narrative.

"But yes," Lizette broke in in protest. "But yes, it has. I went to him without the asking, because from the very moment of my first seeing him I loved him. And then, I did not know that it was sin."

"He knew," the other said. "So, at least, your sin has not been greater than his own."

"He has not sinned," she said, almost in anger. "The sin is mine, I tell you. It is mine!"

"Well, have it so," the young man said, smiling. "It is evident I cannot change you but the fact remains."

"He has not sinned," Lizette repeated, "except through me."

"Nor you except through him."

"Ah, yes!" Lizette said, softly. "It was I who went to him. He did not seek me out and ask me to do wrong. The sin is mine."

"It does not matter," said the man, now looking at Lizette more closely. This was a new experience. He had not met before in his experience any person who so persisted in bearing burdens which even strangers thought might be carried by the shoulders of another. It was generally the other way. Most persons wished to shift their loads for other backs to bend beneath. He began to be interested.

"It seems to me," he went on, "that your road is clear before you. You say he comes to marry you. Be content. The past is passed. If, in the future, after this marriage has taken place, you so live as to give pleasure to God; if you confess your sins and ask forgiveness of them; if you give in charity of what you have and do allotted penance, all will be well with you."

"It is not for that I ask," she said.

"For what, then?" asked the student, looking closely at her face again and trying to remember who she was.

"It is not that all may be well with me, but that all may be well with him that I would have advice. I begged the Blessed Virgin that sorrows, if they fell, might fall on me. I wish it. It is right. The sin is mine, not his."

"You must love much," he said, still trying to remember.

"I do."

"Does he?"

As he asked this question, there was a keen, unpleasant twinkle in the eyes of the young man. At last he had placed her. Her face had been familiar, and at length he recognized her as the girl who had so often been with the man who once had ducked him in the Seine. A plan began to form there in his mind as he looked down at her, but he did not broach it yet. He went on with the religious dialogue. It would be most necessary for his plan's fruition

that she should not know he had a plan or any reason for one. He was not the man to strike out openly. He waited for her answer to his question. He really wanted to know its answer now, and the dialogue had assumed an interest personal to him. He asked again:

"Does he?"

"He does. I know he does," she answered, with a proud flicker of a smile upon her anxious face.

The student was clever.

"Then if you fled from him would not that give to him the greatest of all sorrows?"

He waited for her answer. He was anxious to have her confirm the theory in his mind.

She hesitated. She had thought of this. But as she paused a glimmering thought of final sacrifice came to her mind—of sacrifice so great that it made her physically cold to think of it. There was that other girl! Perhaps her Pudgy would be happier at last with that other girl who loved him and who had not sinned. Surely, he would suffer first, but it might be better for him in the end. She had not sinned! That tall girl had not sinned!

He waited while she thought, and finally asked her again:

"If you fled from him, would it not give to him the greatest of all sorrows?" He added quickly, in consonance with his rapidly-forming plan: "Not that it is not well for us to suffer, sometimes."

"It might," she said. "It would—"

The student was eager now, and interrupted. Here was his chance to hurt the man who had forced humiliation on him. He did not think so far as to believe that he could permanently injure Murdoch, for he had not so much faith in woman's nature as to believe that she would really run away from him forever, even if she thought that doing it would save his soul. But the thought was in his mind that he might make her go away for a small time and worry Murdoch. It was a great idea and must be carefully carried out or it would fail. When he spoke it was slowly and with caution. He kept his eyes fixed closely on her face so that he could see the effect of what he said. He was no

longer in a hurry for his dinner. He felt a sort of triumph as his plan was born. It was a clever plan, for if Murdoch really loved the little one it would make him suffer worse than he had suffered when he had been ducked that day, and the suffering would last longer.

"You have prayed and asked the Virgin?" he questioned again.

"I have asked and not been answered," said Lizette, "unless——"

She told him of the visit and the gossip of the women, and asked if it might properly be taken for an answer to her prayers.

"Where is he now?"

"He is coming from America."

"When will he be here?"

"Within a week, I think, or less. I cannot tell, exactly."

The student smiled a most unpleasant smile. He felt it on his face and, fearing that she would see the pleasure which he felt in anticipation at prospect of doing harm to Murdoch, he hid it with his hand.

"Your belief in the Holy Virgin is absolute?" he inquired, anxious to be certain that his plan would carry through when once he launched it.

"Of a certainty," replied Lizette, "but she has not answered, unless the visit of the women and their talking was the answer. Was it? Do you think it was?"

"Who knows?" he said, with calm deliberation. He must make her think it might be, but he must leave the matter open to some question in order that she would want to ask again in other circumstances and so carry out his plan.

"There is a place—a shrine," he said, presently, "where the Virgin especially replies to many prayers. I mean at Lourdes. Have you heard of it?"

Lizette looked up with eagerness. She had not thought of that. All Paris knows about the yearly pilgrimage to Lourdes and she had known of it; had even seen the pilgrims miserably clustered around the railway station once while they waited for the trains to take them to the south of France to pray. It seemed almost like an inspiration

to her. Surely, that was the thing to do. The Virgin, who did not answer when she prayed at ease in the cathedral, might listen to her if she made the pilgrimage.

The young man smiled most unpleasantly. If Lizette had seen him when he was a student there, at Julian's, and had tried to edge around so that he might kick the head of the prostrate student who had ducked him, she would have seen how like his smile was now to that he had worn then. A similar plan was in his mind. Again he planned to play a coward's part and strike Murdoch when he could offer no defense. But this time there was not a roomful of young men, who loved fair play, to watch him and cry shame. He told her of the pilgrimage, and held great hopes out to her. He said that he understood the situation now, and realized that she was doing right to hesitate. He talked cleverly and well. He found out when the absent one was coming back and felt a pleasure in his heart, because the annual pilgrimage began upon the morrow, and, by working on her feelings, he could get her off on it before Murdoch came to claim her.

The plan appealed to her. It seemed but right that she should make a pilgrimage. It was a pilgrimage for Pudgy, whom she loved. She listened to the student, and determined to follow his advice. He was very kind, and even secured for her a ticket for one of the official trains which started on the morrow.

With streaming eyes she wrote a little note to Murdoch, and placed it on the mantel back of the new stove, where he would surely see it. It was the last of many, for many were torn up before she felt that she had said all that she wished to say and yet had told him not too much, so that he would know on what journey she had gone and, following, overset her plans, which she had made for his good, not for hers.

It was a tear-stained, pitiful confession, indefinite in what it said. And so she left it where, should her love appear before she should come back, or should the Holy Virgin tell her never to return, Murdoch would find it and would know. She packed some necessaries in a little trunk. She placed her dearest treasure—that last letter

from John Murdoch—in her bosom, and, in the early morning of the day before Murdoch and Kentucky eagerly arrived in Paris, she began that pitiful journey with the halt and lame, the palsied and the blind, to Lourdes.

CHAPTER XX.

GONE.

The ship neared the end of its journey. Kentucky became possessed of a mighty calm. He was satisfied. Big soul that was his! He had accomplished his end. Through his efforts the two whom he knew should be together, were to be reunited, and he was satisfied. His hard rubs against the world had, in their friction, rubbed his selfishness away. He had filled the emptiness of the life whose early fulness lay buried in the south of France, with the interests of these two, for whose happiness he gladly would have sacrificed his own.

Murdoch was restless.

Presently they were within a few hours of Liverpool. They were in the bow upon the anchor deck and stood in silence peering into the fog. How little they dreamed of the depth of that fog, less palpable but more terrifying, which would soon surround and baffle them, in whose sombre mysteries was somewhere hidden the one to whom they hastened with such joy and happy plans. There were sounds of other traffic in the channel, but there was little sight of it, so dense was the all-obscuring mist. The tooting of small horns and the occasional firing of a gun gave the navigators news of where other craft were plying, and the great steamship progressed slowly, feeling her way as a frightened boy might in a dark and fearsome cellar.

They landed early in the morning and hurried through the customs house formalities, and soon were on their way to London in a train which rushed though the peaceful, rain-wet English countryside with gratifying speed. In London they drove from Waterloo to Victoria station in a cab, whose driver was promised extra payment if he got

them there in time to catch the regular eleven o'clock express for Dover. There they took the channel boat for Calais. In the train, as they whirled along through the beautiful English country, they talked of her. On the dingy Channel boat they talked of her. On the train again, from Calais to Paris, they spoke only of Lizette.

When the train began to pass through the environs of the French capital their conversation ceased. Each was eager for the moment when they should arrive in Paris. Murdoch did not think that Lizette would be at the railroad station to meet them. He believed that she would think as he did, that the dear old studio, where there would be no curious ones to look and wonder, would be a better place to meet. Kentucky smiled and offered wagers that she would not be strong enough to wait.

Murdoch was right. Lizette was not waiting at the station.

Again they rushed their luggage through the customs as rapidly as they could, and had it loaded on a cab. They gave the driver the address and started gayly for the studio which overlooked the Gardens of the Luxembourg. Kentucky told that driver in strangely fluent French that there was much cause for haste. He hastened.

As they whirled through the streets with the recklessness that comes to Parisian drivers because they and not pedestrians have the right of way, they did not speak. The tears were in John Murdoch's eyes as they caught welcome, fleeting glimpses of the old places which had been so familiar to him in past days. Each had a memory of her to offer to him as he passed. The *Café de la Paix*—how many times had they idly sipped their coffee there as the crowds passed, almost, it seemed, for the sole purpose of amusing them? The great fountain at the head of the *Boul' Miche'* recalled that first night in Paris when he had driven over to the Quarter with Fitzpatrick and the French hat merchant. Kentucky gripped his hand. They saw one or two students whom Murdoch recognized and who waved their hands at Kentucky, but there must have been some change in Murdoch, for they did not seem to know him. They passed the *Domperille*. Murdoch

strained his eyes to see into the place, but it was too early in the day. It was dull and unattractive.

Another moment and they were within sight of the old building. The trees were swaying in the dear old Gardens of the Luxembourg, the birds were twittering in them, the children were at their play in them with softened shouts. Nowhere was there any visible change and Murdoch's heart went out to everything and everyone he saw. The very griminess of the old studio building was dear to him. Dingy, mansard-roofed, it leaned slightly backward as if to steady itself against the jarring of the great steam trams which went puffing noisily before it. They were new to Murdoch. The two men peered up at the window near that skylight, which had given Murdoch such fine north light for his painting in the old days. They looked eagerly at the street door. But in neither was that bright, expectant and expected face looking out for them. Murdoch was disappointed. His first impulse was to jump from the cab and run upstairs to meet Lizette and greet her, but he thought that that would be unfair. Their meeting could not be too sacred to be shared by Kentucky, who had crossed the ocean to bring him to his love. He waited and paid the cabman and helped pull the luggage off the cab, although every nerve was tingling, every muscle tense to hurry up the stairs and find Lizette. The withered old concierge came out and greeted Murdoch with an enthusiasm which might have fitted a mother's joy at a long-absent son's home-coming. It delayed Murdoch five seconds, and almost exasperated him.

He bounded up the stairs, two at a time, with Kentucky's ungainly long legs taking great leaps behind him. He dashed into the studio with her name on his lips. There was no reply, but the first thing that caught his eye was the cheerful glow of the fire in the new stove. That meant that she was waiting for him, surely. He hurried through the other rooms. She was not in them. He thought that she might have hidden in a closet to make him search, and he opened each closed door, but nowhere could he find her. He reasoned that she had gone to the station, but had missed them and would hurry back distressed.

Kentucky was dumfounded. They sat down and gazed at each other in bitter disappointment. Kentucky had just risen to go to the concierge when the old woman poked her grizzled head into the room, and said:

"You see I had the fire burning brightly in the new stove. She told me that I must closely look to that. There is also a telegram for Madame upon the mantel shelf. It came yesterday, after Madame went away."

"Went away!—Yesterday!"—exclaimed the two men in chorus.

"Yes. Did you not expect to find her gone? She seemed to feel most sorrowful about the going. She kissed me as she said adieu, and told me that I must keep the fire burning in the new stove so that its warmth might welcome you. She kissed me as she said adieu."

The old woman plumed herself at this, as if it had been a great feather in her cap.

"She was most anxious about that fire in the new stove," she went on, glancing at the red gleam of its isinglass. "She wept, mostly, but she told me that she had had a telegram from you from far away America, bidding her to have a bright fire there when you should come, and she charged me to keep it burning. It seemed to me a most strange thing to send a message so great a way about, but one can never tell. You see, I kept it burning with the great brilliance."

She pointed proudly to the fire of welcome. So Lizette's hands had not been those to keep it burning, after all.

"When the second telegram came, I brought it up," she went on, busily, "hoping that Madame might not yet have made her departure. But the studio was empty. I knew that Madame might stop at the shop of the woman who sells coals, so I ran after her. The shop was closed. There is a young priest in whom the old woman who sells coals takes much interest—you understand? She takes almost as much of interest in him as if he were her son. You understand? Her son? La la! Her son. But, of course, that could not be. Oh, no. For the woman who sells coals has never had a husband, so she could not have a son. You understand? Still, she takes much interest

in the young priest and he in her. Well, it seemed that the young man was at the gate assisting those who make the holy pilgrimage to Lourdes. The old woman who sells coals was with him there. The shop was closed, so, of course, Madame was not there. So I brought the telegram back here and left it where you found it.

"Madame told me before she went that she had arranged everything for you. After I had helped the cabman take her box down the stairs, she came back again and stayed here such a time that I came up to see if there was not some way in which I could be of service. She was on her knees, over there in front of the big picture. I thought at first that she was praying, but then I thought that, of course, she could not be praying to a picture, and then I entered and asked her if she was looking for something that she had lost. She was weeping and told me that she feared she had lost the greatest thing that she had ever owned, but told me that I could not help her find it. She said that only the Holy Virgin could tell her where and how to find it, which I thought was most strange talk. She told me to go away and to wait for her outside. I started, and as I went out I saw that she was again on her knees, looking for that something which she had lost and which she told me that I could not help her find. I am old, I know, but I would have been very glad to have got down to help her look, for of a certainty I am very fond of little Madame. But she bade me go, and so I went.

"Finally, when, almost an hour afterward, she came down the stairs, I asked her if she had found that thing which she had lost. She said she had not found it, and I told her that if she would tell me what it was I would make the most careful search for it while she was gone, so that I might have it waiting for her when she came back.

"'No,' she said to me, 'you cannot find it. It is useless for you to make the search. I have left it behind me in the dear old studio, and if I ever come back to the studio I know that it will be there waiting for me. But before I can search for it again the Holy Virgin must tell me that I have the right to it.'

"This was most strange talk and I did not understand

what she meant by it, but when I asked her to explain how I could help her in her search, she only wept the more. She drove away, but in a few moments she came back and went again up to the studio. She said that she had forgotten to tell me about the stove, and I came up here with her.

She was still weeping. It was most strange and most distressing. She showed me all about the stove, and said that I must keep the great fire in it until you should come. And while we were talking about the stove, she suddenly sank down upon her knees again before that picture there, the large one in front of which the curtains are, and I thought at first that she had spied that thing which she had lost there on the floor. I was about to say that I was glad that she had found it, when I saw that she had not found it at all, but that she was praying. For a second I thought that she was praying to the picture, but then I heard her utter the name of the Holy Virgin and I knew, of course, that it was she to whom she prayed. She seemed to be in great distress, and I went out upon the landing, for it did not seem right for me to be there while she prayed, and I thought that that was perhaps what had kept her so long a time before, and that she had not really lost anything, but had been kneeling in prayer and not in search.

"Finally she came out into the hallway again where I waited, and she said to me that I must watch everything very closely, and told me again that all must be in readiness for you when you came."

"Did she leave no word for me at all?" asked Murdoch, in distress and greatly puzzled.

"Oh, yes. But I thought you would have seen it. It is there—the letter—there on the mantel, by the sketches," explained the concierge. "She told me to tell you that it was there, but in my hurry and excitement I forgot."

The letter was half hidden by one of Murdoch's sketches. A ring at the street bell called the concierge away, and Murdoch was glad that she had gone, for when he read the letter there were tears in his eyes, and so strong was his emotion that he could not speak. For there, in Lizette's crabbed little handwriting, he read:

"Oh, Pudgy! I am doing this which breaks my heart. I am going away, and, oh, Pudgy! I do not know if I shall come back. You have been so good to me, you have loved me so much and been so very good to me. And I have been not grateful. I see it now. So, before I say more, I must—oh, Pudgy, it seems as if my heart were breaking in me—I must tell to you my gratitude. I am grateful to you for all the days that are gone—dear Pudgy—and I am grateful to you for all the days that are to come, for no matter where I may be in them, or what I may be doing, they will always have the brightness shining on them from the days that are in the past. And your letter, Pulgy, the one in which you tell me that you wish me to be your wife! Oh, Pudgy, I thought that I should go mad with joy and gratitude, when I read its so sweet words. Ah, *cher, cher, cher*, how I had dreamed of that! How I had gazed at the weddings in the Bois and at the brides as they drove through the streets of Paris in their veils and wedding gowns, and dreamed and prayed in my so small way that sometime I might be the wife of you—that some day you would tell me what you now have told me in that letter—that letter—which shall ever rest upon my heart, in life and death. My love! My love! My love! I have sat for long times in the studio in many days now gone, and written on the paper 'Madame John Murdoch, Madame John Murdoch, Madame John Murdoch,' over and again over, scarcely hoping that ever such great chance of wonderful fortune would come to me. And if it had not, my Pudgy, think not that I should have had the small thought of anger or right to disappointment. No! So great has been the happiness of my years with you that it has been greater than all the happiness in all the lives of twenty women. I know that. I know it. I thank you. A million times I thank you. And I should be so proud, if ever, Pudgy, I can think that I can be the wife of you without also, being at the same time, the ruin of you in your new home! Oh, Pudgy! I shall die of joy!"

"You have been so good to me and I have not been grateful. I see it now. I did not see it before, or before I should have realized that it was wrong for me to give to

you the bother, to ask of you or expect more than was mine already. I have often feel most guilty and to-day I know why it is that I have feel so. It is because I have given to you the bother. In your home there in America I should not have given to you the bother, but I did, and I am sorry. Forgive me, Pudgy. Give forgiveness to your small Lizette. All the time I begged you to come back to me, when I should not have done such things at all, but should have been happy in what you had already given to me—the years so sweet! But you! You, with your heart so big, so tender, true, not selfish! You could not be harsh enough to tell me that I was the bother.

"When your letter came to me—that so darling letter, full of love and asking of me that I should be your wife—I had no thought of going from you as I now am going. My only thought was waiting, trembling with the happiness, until your great strong arms should come to me and all enfold me, to take me back with you. I had no realization at those moments of the truth that what would be so great joyousness to me might be the ruin to my Pudgy. Now, when I have heard about New York, so cruel and so cold, and know what distress and scorn it might bring to you there to have me who have so sinned in your home for wife, I halt—I stop.

"I have heard how Fosdyck—you remember him, perhaps—was ruin there because he wed the one he loved, but who have sinned as I have sinned. I must not bring on you the ruin. The ruin must not come to you of me. It is only sweetness which it is that I would give to you, my beloved, my dear. It is that way that it seems to me. I have ask it of the Holy Virgin that she tell me what to do, but if I have had answer to my prayer it must be that the word which came to me that such marriage would work ruin to you was that answer. I cannot tell. I know so little of such matters. I am going now to one who, perhaps, will tell me what to do. I have only the very, very little hope that she will tell me that I have the right to take of you the great sacrifice which you out of your so big heart have offered to me. If it should be, my Pudgy, that you should not see your small Lizette again, remem-

ber that she will, so long as the breath flutters ever so slightly in the bosom of her, be loving you and thinking of you and thanking you. If it shall be that the one to whom I go shall not answer me, I fear it must be that I shall be compel to take my doubtingness for answer from her. If she shall say me 'Yes, it is right that you should take the happiness and it shall not be the ruin to your Pudgy,' then I shall fly to you and find you, though the whole world is between us.

"Worry not about me, my Pudgy. If the one to whom I go shall tell me that it shall be wrong for me to go to you—that such going shall bring the ruin to you as it came to Fosdyck, surely I shall be helped in some way so that I shall not have too great suffering. If I shall learn that I must not go to you, worry not about the sorrow which shall fill my soul. The so sweet memory of years agone will help me as sweet memories have helped our dear Kentucky. Tell him, Pudgy, that I love him.

"I go to find the path.

"I rain upon your face a million kisses. I fold you to my heart.

"If it shall be that I shall not come back to you, it shall at the same time be that ever I shall be think of you and blow kisses to you from my finger tips. Again! Again! A million kisses! Again I fold you to my heart. Again adieu.

LIZETTE."

Murdoch let his face fall into his hands and sobbed. Kentucky went gently to him and took the letter from him. When he had read it, he, too, was weeping.

Kentucky rose and took Murdoch by the hand.

"I am glad you asked her, old man," he said. "You did not tell me that you had, but I felt certain of it. Have you any notion of what it is that has driven her away?"

"None."

"Someone has told her that marrying her would ruin you in New York. That is plain."

"Had she ever spoken of any thoughts of this kind to you, Kentucky, before you came to get me?"

"No. She often questioned me about New York, and I am afraid that I gave her a bad opinion of the place. I

hate it. You know that. I told her that the people there were mostly flunkies, which is true. I told her that they were money worshippers and bowers down before conventionality, which is also true. But I cannot think that anything I ever said to her could have put the notion in her head that if you married her it would bring moral ruin to you there. Who could have told her about Fosdyck? That is where the clue is. You know the man. He married his model, or something of that sort, and took her to New York with him. He hasn't had a very easy time, I presume, but his affair was as different from yours and Lizette's as daylight is from dark. Poor child! Someone has taken advantage of her emotions. What is all this she says about religion? We used to read the Bible together and talk about the beauties of Christianity. When she sat there with me in my little room, while I was painting out my debt to you for those new clothes you made me buy, she read to me from the New Testament and I told her some Bible stories, but we had no talk which could have brought her to a state of mind at all like what has evidently sent the poor, mistaken child away from you. There were no such notions in her head when I saw her last. I am sure of that. Murdoch, it has been a woman or a priest. We must find a woman or a priest."

Together the two men searched each room for signs. In the studio Murdoch's easel, with his brushes in their little jars of water on the floor beside it, bore a fresh, new canvas. Those others which she had had the dealer stretch that day in preparation for the great home-coming, were neatly ranged beside the easel. The two men understood. In her closet there still hung all her little fineries. It was evident that she had taken with her only the simplest of her clothes. Murdoch searched in vain for the old red wrapper which had been so dear to him, and which she had preserved with so many darnings. In the dresser he found the little things of his over which she had with such loving conscientiousness labored, and the darned socks, each pair in its small round bundle, were pathetic in appeal. But nowhere was there clue of where the little one had flown to.

They went back to the room where the new stove was blazing with its false fire of welcome. Standing by it and leaning an elbow on the mantel shelf, Murdoch tried to think out some solution to the strange problem which he had found where he had only thought to find Lizette. He idly picked up his sketches which she had arranged upon it, and as he did so found that handkerchief which Lizette had lifted from the floor and placed there with the tongs, while yet her hatred of the tall girl burned within her. He thought, of course, that it must be Lizette's, but the embroidered "M" in the corner showed at once that that could not be. Where had he seen an "M" like that on some lady's handkerchief? He had seen one, and studied it. For a moment the recollection struggled vainly in his mind, and then he knew. He had seen it in a corner of Mary Markleham's handkerchief the day when he had driven through the Park with her, and, as he drove, compared her, the object of his first boyish affection, to the little girl who waited for him in Paris.

"Kentucky," he said, "Mary Markleham has been here. This is her handkerchief, here on the mantel."

"Who is she?"

"A New York girl whom I thought once that I should some day like to marry. It seems as if she were ever to be associated with all the troubles which come to Lizette and me. It was she who was at the Moulin Rouge that night when Lizette ran away, and we searched all Paris for her. Do you remember?"

"I could never forget that night, Murdoch. She showed her love for you to me that night more clearly than she had ever shown it to me before. I told you that there was a woman or a priest in this. Did Lizette know that you had once thought of marrying that girl?"

"Yes. I told her of it."

"Is she the kind who would come here to see the little girl and talk to her, if she found out that, perhaps, Lizette had changed your feelings towards herself?"

"No. It would be as impossible for her to do a thing like that as it would be for Lizette herself to do it."

Again they called the concierge. Had any ladies been

there? Yes. There had been two. The old woman told them all she could about the visitors—how they had mis-understood what she had said to them and had come up-stairs. The concierge presumed that little Madame had seen them and explained to them, for, after awhile, they had gone away again.

"Do you know where they would be likely to stay in Paris?" Kentucky asked of Murdoch.

"Probably at the Grand Hotel. They were there before. I think I had best go up and see them. I cannot believe that there can be any connection between Mary Markleham and the worry of the little one, but I will go and see."

CHAPTER XXI.

A TANGLED SKEIN.

He found them at the Grand Hotel, as he had thought he would. The aunt met him first, and explained that they expected to go south that night. She went to get Miss Markleham, but when the latter entered to see Murdoch the aunt did not return with her. She was unaffectedly glad to see him, and it evidently greatly pleased her to find that he had only reached Paris that morning and had called on her without delay. She spoke of the promptness of his visit, and then added:

"But still, it is not so very striking, after all—this promptness. You probably would not have come at all if we had not first gone to see you. What a splendid place your studio is! I don't wonder that your mind turned back from banking in prosaic old New York to your own chosen labor here. What are you going to do about it? Not many men have such a problem presented to them—the problem of choosing between two careers, at both of which they have proved their worthiness."

"My work will lie in New York, I am afraid," said Murdoch. "The old strings of love for the smell of paint and brushes and all that goes with them are strong, but I have learned to love the new work, too, and my father made it something of a charge upon me. I am very sorry that I was not at the studio when you came."

"We made ourselves at home, after a fashion; that is, we misunderstood the concierge, because we neither of us speak French beyond a few words, and when she said that you were expected we thought that she meant you were at once coming home. We stayed long enough to disprove that, and on the way down decided that she had merely

told us that you would be there in a few days and had not meant that you were in Paris and had merely gone out for a little time. Our mistake was encouraged by the look of the studio. It certainly did not seem at all like a deserted place. The fire was burning brightly in the stove, and—and the roses over your picture were as fresh as possible." She laughed and colored vividly. "I—I must confess something to you. I—I took one of them. May I be forgiven?" She tried to pass the matter off gayly, but made rather a bad job of it. "You see, we traveling Americans are all vandals. We steal stones at Stratford-on-Avon, and deface the Tower of London when the beef-eaters are not looking, and I have quite a handful of grass from that delightful garden back of Westminster Abbey. You will see that the flower from your picture has distinguished company in my small group of relics."

She did not tell him that while she spoke that one relic was honored above all others by a place within her bosom. She did not tell him that its thorns had torn her, as Lizette, without her knowledge, for a wicked moment, soon repented of, had hoped they would. She did not tell him of the tears which dimmed her eyesight when she looked at it. She did not tell him that the flower which she had taken from his picture of "Parting" was now a funeral flower, and rested in the sentiment of her imagination on a grave where Love lay buried.

"Did you—did you see no one but the concierge?" asked Murdoch.

"We saw only her," replied Miss Markleham. "Why? Was there some one else whom we might have seen if we had looked? I shall confess that I almost did carry my wickedness, begun in the stealing of the rose, so far as to go through the whole apartment. I should have loved to do it. I positively longed to probe the mysteries that lay behind the curtains. But I resisted the temptation and did not. Should I have made terrible discoveries if I had yielded to the tempter? Is there a Bluebeard mystery about your Paris studio, while you are living in New York and getting praised for solemn banking work?"

"No. There is no mystery; that is, there is none of that

sort. Only—only I cannot find a—a friend, whom I expected to meet when I came here to Paris—and I thought, perhaps, that—my friend might have been at the studio when you called. That was all."

The girl's quick eyes saw now what she might have seen at first but for her own confusion. She saw that Murdoch was greatly worried about something, and she told him so. She asked him if she could help him.

"I am greatly worried," Murdoch confessed. "Greatly worried. Thank you for your offer, but I am afraid you cannot help me. You see, I came to Paris, hoping to find a friend, who is—whom I very, very much wish to find. But I cannot. I had thought that, perhaps, that friend might have been in the studio when you called, and that you could give me some news or—something."

It was a poor speech, badly made, but she did not seem to notice that. He could not doubt the truth of what she said, but he could not reconcile it with what the concierge had said. Lizette had certainly been in the studio while the visitors were there, and after they had left her joyousness had been changed to tears. Then a glimmering of the truth began to come to him, although he did not know it was the truth.

"I don't know what to ask of you, Miss Markleham," he said, finally. "But I know you will be kind to me and forgive me if I make blunders. Please believe that I am in great distress. Like a drowning man, perhaps, I grasp at straws."

Miss Markleham was puzzled. This was an entirely new John Murdoch. She had always thought of him as one whose self-possession would be hard to overturn. She did not in the least understand what had overturned it now, but that something had was evident. The man's distress was plain. She could only tell him that whatever she could do to help him she would do.

"Did you—did you and your aunt talk of me and of New York while you were at the studio?" he asked, stumblingly. "Did you say anything which, if overheard by any one, might make that person believe—believe that—"

He could not go on. and stopped, confused and flushing.

"Believe what?" she asked, with richly rising color. The thought that perhaps there had been some one in the studio to have overheard what she had said to her aunt was a dreadful thought. It was she who was worried now. She spoke rapidly after she had given herself a second's pause to get her breath.

"John Murdoch, do you mean to intimate to me that there was some one in that studio who might have overheard what my aunt and myself said to each other; some one who would have been base enough to listen to what we said, even if the opportunity had been there?"

She had risen from her chair, and stood facing him with flaming cheeks. The bodice beneath which that withered rose was lying was moved quickly by sharp breathing. Her terror that some one other than her aunt had heard the confession which she had made that day of her love for Murdoch, some one who would tell him of it, almost overwhelmed her. She lost control of herself, and took refuge in an anger against that possible unknown.

"Have you among your friends an—an eavesdropper?"

The change in her amazed Murdoch and added to his bewilderment.

"I am sure that there was no one there who would or could, knowingly, do anything that by any stretch of the imagination could be termed base or unworthy of the very highest and most noble delicacy and honor," he said. "But there was some one there. I shall, I see, have to be most frank and honest with you. I shall have to trust you with a secret, but it is one with which I had intended to trust all the world within a very short time. There was some one in that studio, Miss Markleham. Do you remember that you were good enough to pick me up and let me drive with you through Central Park one day?"

"Yes," she said, very softly, as if the memory hurt her; "I remember very clearly."

"Well, I told you that day that I was coming over here to take back some one with me to New York."

"Yes," said Miss Markleham, still more softly. Indeed, her voice was almost inaudible. "You told me that you should take back to New York with you an old friend here

named Kentucky. I asked you if there was any one else here whom you might take back with you, and you did not answer. I remember—very well. You did not answer."

"There was some one else," said Murdoch. "There was some one else."

"I knew it," said Miss Markleham, very softly. "I could tell it that day by the look in your eyes and the dreams, unspoken in your voice. I knew then that you were in love, and that when you came to Paris you would get your love and take her back with you. I knew it, and I told Auntie so. Was I right?"

"You were wholly right. You were—wholly right. But when I came to Paris I found that the—the one—whom I had—intended to take back with me—had, filled with a mistaken idea of self-sacrifice—had gone away. And that is why I am worried. It occurred to me that, perhaps, that day you and your aunt might have said something there in the studio, which the little one—the one whom I had intended to take back with me—whom I came over here to get—said something wholly unintentionally; I mean, without knowledge of the presence of—of any one—which might have given the—an idea that, perhaps, it would be better for me—for *me*, you understand—an idea that, perhaps, it might be better for me if, when I came, I should find no one waiting for me, no one to take back with me. She was in the studio when you were there."

Miss Markleham turned away from him and went to the window, just as she had turned away from her aunt that day in the studio, and gone to the window to look out, unseeing, at the Gardens of the Luxembourg. There was great tumult beneath that hidden rose which she had stolen from over "Parting." It was too great, for a moment, to make it possible for her to speak. When she had told her aunt that day that she was certain that John Murdoch was in love and that he was coming over to Paris to get his love and take her back with him, she had believed what she had said, believed it heartily enough to suffer keenly because of her belief. But this confirmation of it, this proof from his own lips that the man she loved did, really, love another, was hard to bear just the same, and so she walked

for a moment to the window and looked out, unable to still the tumult in her heart enough to make speech possible. At last she turned and spoke to him. The flush had left her face and there was pallor in its place.

"If you will be frank with me," she said, "I shall be frank with you. You are in love with some one. Am I right?"

"You are wholly right."

"You are afraid that the some one whom you love was in the studio that day, and that she overheard something which we might have said about you, or about New York, or about something, which has made her run away from you?"

"You are wholly right. I fear just that. I am in great trouble and distress, Miss Markleham. I cannot tell just what to think. Something has driven her away from me. I don't know what. I only know that after your departure she was in great distress, and that finally she went away, because, as she said to me in the letter she left for me, she had heard about a man named Fosdyck, an American artist, who married his model over here and took her home with him in New York City, and who, she says, was ruined by so doing. She may have been told this by some busy-body. She was in the studio the other day when you and your aunt called and intended—she told the concierge that she intended—to tell you that you had misunderstood, and that I was not in Paris, but would be in a day or two, the concierge having been unable to make you understand. It may be that she had intended to tell you, but that after she found who it was—she—she could not bring herself—to—speak to you. There are—there are especial reasons why—why she might hesitate to speak to *you*."

"To *me*, especially? Why?" asked Miss Markleham.

"Must I tell you why?" asked Murdoch.

"You said you would be frank. You said—that you were—grasping at a straw. You should make the straw as strong as possible. Don't you think so?"

Miss Markleham was very tense and eager. Murdoch's confession was not a surprise to her; that is, the subject matter of the confession was not a surprise to her. But

her heart stopped in horror when she thought that of all people in the world it might be that the very woman whom John Murdoch loved was the very one who had heard her make her own passionate confession to her aunt. She was in an agony to learn all she could.

"Well, I will tell you why," said Murdoch, very slowly. "Do you remember the night we met at the Moulin Rouge?"

"Yes." Miss Markleham said this very softly.

"Well, that night—she was—with me there. And I—I neglected her—for you. It was the first time I had ever neglected her. She thought—she thought—that I—that I cared for you. That was why—why I thought that if you—if *you*, especially—said anything which she might—innocently, mind you—she never would have intentionally played eavesdropper, but she is human and might have listened to what you said without intending to at first, while she was preparing to go in to see you. Then, if you said something of that sort—why she might—she might have thought it was her—was her duty to run away from me—for my sake. It would be like her—to run away from me—for my sake."

Miss Markleham had never seen John Murdoch affected at all like this before. She would not have believed it if any one had told her that he could be so affected.

"You understand, Miss Markleham, that if my distress and worry were not very real, and if I did not feel that somehow, without your knowledge, your visit to the studio is connected with the course that she has taken—you understand that I should not say these things to you. I am sure that you will understand, and that you will help me if you can."

"How would it help you in finding her, even if you knew that it was something which we said which gave her an idea that it would injure you to marry her?" There was great tumult underneath the rose which had once been over Murdoch's "Parting," the rose whose thorn had torn Miss Markleham's tender flesh, the rose which tore her heart more deeply than any thorn would ever tear her flesh. When she went on, she spoke very rapidly. "If it

was not true—if it was not really true, that it *would* injure you to marry her, could anything that we could say make her think so? Is a woman who would hide and listen to what other women say worth marrying? I know nothing of where she has gone or why."

"Was anything said that day about Fosdyck's marriage? Did you say that it had ruined him in New York City to have married as he did?"

"No. I said, on the contrary, that Fosdyck loved his wife and she loved him. It was my aunt who said that the marriage had ruined him."

Miss Markleham suddenly became much excited at a thought which came to her.

"Was it she—this woman whom you love—who kept the roses there in your studio over your big picture?" she demanded. "Did she put them there? Did she?"

"Yes," said Murdoch. "The souvenir you took was—one of the posies that she had arranged—to please me when I came back to Paris and to her."

Miss Markleham was very white now. She rose from her chair and went to the other end of the room. Murdoch sat with his head bowed, thinking hard. He scarcely saw that she had risen. When she came back her self control was gone entirely. She tossed the withered rose into his lap.

"Then, surely, I don't want it," she said, quickly. "There it is."

He put his hand on it in surprise and felt the warmth in the poor, withered posy. Her hand was at her bosom, and he guessed where it had been. He was astonished beyond measure.

"Bah! It is horrible," she said. "Horrible! To think that I took a flower *that* woman bought and placed above your picture. To think that I took her flower and—and did what I did with it. It is horrible!"

She made a little motion of disgust.

"Yes, we talked about Fosdyck there," she said. "We did talk of him. And Auntie said he had ruined himself by his marriage to some woman whom he came over here to find. She also said that she hoped you hadn't been so

idiotic. And I defended you. I said it was impossible. I believed in you. I said it was impossible for you—you whom I had set upon a pedestal—to ever love any woman who was unworthy of you. I said that because I was mistaken. I believed in you. But I was wrong, it seems. You did love a woman who was unworthy of you, and you—you of all men—had come to Paris for the very purpose of marrying her and marrying ruin, just as Auntie said she hoped you wouldn't. And she—that very woman—was behind those curtains—she must have been behind those curtains—listening to all I said. What a triumph for her! It is horrible! Horrible!"

"How? A triumph over what? She has gone. I came to get her and to take her back with me. She is not at all what you say she is. She is the sweetest, she is the truest, she is the best woman I have ever known. Her very flight was born of nothing but her true, unselfish love. Not worthy of me? She is worthy of the best man that ever lived. She says she is not worthy and has gone away. Is that the act of a woman who is selfish? She heard your talk about the ruin that Fosdyck's marriage had taken to him. She, not understanding, has feared that like might come to me if she did as I entreated and went back with me. So, to save me from herself—from herself, do you understand?—she has run away from me. She has gone away with her poor heart torn and bleeding through the idle talk of women. I see the whole miserable complication now. Shall I tell it to you? You can guess then whether she is selfish; whether she is worthy of me or of any other man that ever lived. I spoke to you a moment ago about the night I saw you at the Moulin Rouge. Do you remember? Well, that night I had taken her there, and I neglected her to talk to you. I neglected her most shamefully, and for the first time since I had known and loved her. I finally found why it was that my unintentional neglect of her had hurt her so tremendously. She had watched us from behind a pillar for a moment, and got the idea in her head that you and I were in love with one another. You see? You asked me to be frank, and I am frank. Afterwards, I did what was, perhaps, a very foolish thing. I told her

that before I came to Paris I had been in love—with you. It was true. When I left New York I was in love with you—or thought I was. Please forgive me, Miss Markleham. You told me that I was to tell you all and that then you would be frank with me. She seemed very much astonished to think that any one who had known you—so splendid and beautiful a girl as you—could ever afterwards love such a modest, unassuming little one as she—Lizette."

"Is that her name?" asked Miss Markleham, who was listening very eagerly.

"Yes. She could not understand it. In all your life, Miss Markleham, no one has ever paid you more sincere and earnest compliments than has that same Lizette—the little one who has run away and left me because she heard your aunt say in the studio that marriage to a Latin Quarter girl had ruined Fosdyck. It probably would not have made so much impression on her had it come from any other source in any other circumstances. But now she feels—poor child—after seeing you again, and admiring you again; and after hearing that Fosdyck's marriage ruined him and after hearing your aunt say that she hoped I had not come over here to make a blunder such as he had made—she feels that she has no right to risk my future; that she has no right to marry me. So she has gone away. I see plainly that you cannot help me. What you have told me only confirms what I had feared, that's all. It shows me why she went away. It shows me what changed her train of thought, which I know had been very happy and exultant till you came. The concierge has told me that she was most joyous in the thought of my return to her before that. Can't you appreciate her action as I do, Miss Markleham? Can't you see the real beauty and self-sacrifice of it? Can't you understand my worry now? Can't you see what has gone from me and why I should wish to get it back? Don't you see the *grandeur* of the sacrifice the poor child has attempted?

"Did she say nothing in her letter to you of what she overheard us say, except that about Fosdyck?" asked Miss Markleham, with anxious eye fastened on his face.

"Nothing. You must remember that she did not even say that she had overheard you say that. That is all supposition, built on what the concierge has told me."

"Do you really believe that she has gone away wholly with the idea of saving you from a fate like that which my aunt said had come to Fosdyck?"

"I know it!"

Miss Markleham arose again, and again went to the window to look out. Her heart was strangely troubled. Just over it there was a new wound, from the thorns of the rose which she had torn out too impulsively to throw back into Murdoch's lap. The blood oozed slowly from the tiny hurt, but she did not know it and if she had it would not have mattered to her. She was trying to appreciate what the other girl had done. She was trying to see if there was some loophole through which she could see something that was unworthy, sordid, mean or selfish in the action of the other girl who loved John Murdoch. But there was nothing of that sort to see. She searched eagerly, but there was no such motive there to find. If she could have found a cause for hating her and declaring, in her heart, against her, she would have been glad to find it, glad to have given it full sway within her. But she could find nothing of that sort. And even as Lizette's soft heart had changed toward her that morning in the studio—had changed from bitter, jealous hate to soft and solemn pity—so hers changed now.

Miss Markleham turned back toward Murdoch slowly. She saw the wonder of what the other girl had done. She saw it, and the seeing hurt her. It made her feel, deep in her heart, that the other girl had shown greater signs of worthiness than she had. She could not bear to think that in her heart. If the other girl had shown herself self-sacrificing, so would she. She would not let the other triumph over her in fact, even though she might be wholly ignorant of the victory. This woman whom John Murdoch loved should not use her as a means of showing to him such great heights of lofty love. The contrast in his mind would be too great if he should ever find it out. She turned to Murdoch.

"I am sorry that I said what I did about her listening behind the curtains," she said, slowly. "I am very sorry. I presume I should have done the same thing. Please forgive me. Let me help you find your missing one. I am very sorry if we have, in ignorance, been the means of bringing all this sorrow to you. I can see how deep your grief is. Your face tells that most plainly. She must be wonderful—this sweetheart that you came to find and cannot. She must be wonderful, if she really loves you, to go away like that because she heard what we said the other day about Fosdyck."

She did not tell him what else it was that she must have heard—those other things which made the poor child's sacrifice so much greater in her woman's eyes and so humiliated her. She did not let him see, as she could see, the true grandeur of it.

"You must learn a little more before you can do very much," she went on, slowly, after she had pulled herself together. "You must learn a little more to base your search on. Please promise me to let me help you."

"Thank you, there is no way," said Murdoch. "You have helped me already, by showing me the immediate cause which made her go away. Poor little child, she does not understand."

"Won't you let me help you?" asked Miss Markleham again.

"There is no way," said Murdoch.

"Will you promise to if you or I can find a way—"

"If I find anything that you can do to help me, I shall ask you to," he said. "But you are going away to-day."

"I shall wait," said Miss Markleham. "I shall wait and hope that you will find a way in which I can be of use to you—and her."

"But there is really nothing," Murdoch said. "Besides I shouldn't think of letting you sacrifice your plans."

Miss Markleham kindled for a second.

"No. Only she must be permitted to make any sacrifices. Only she. No one but she must be magnanimous and self-forgetful. It is not fair!" Instantly she realized that she had said more than she had intended to or

wished to. So she added, lamely, "You see I am jealous of your little one. You and I are such old friends. I should like very much to feel that I had helped you. Truly I should like it very much. Please let me, if I can. The postponement of our journey would be absolutely nothing. What does it all amount to, anyway? We are here to find amusement. We are going south for nothing else. Auntie is a Catholic, as you know, and makes a polite pretense of devotion in the journey. But it is nothing. She would gladly give it up if anything more interesting should turn up. It would really give me pleasure to have some real reason for going anywhere. That is the trouble with so many of us women. We have no real reason for doing anything—no object except amusement to be obtained by it. Please do this for me. Please let me have an object." Her eyes turned downward and rested on the rose which was between his fingers, hanging down at the side of his chair. "Did you see where I had that rose?"

He reddened now. He had seen, and for a moment he had thought about it, wonderingly, but he had forgotten all about it in the worry of his thoughts about Lizette. He spoke hesitatingly. The thought that this girl really loved him did not come to him, exactly, but he was embarrassed. He answered, hesitatingly:

"Yes. I—think—I know where—it was. It was—very sweet of you to—to be so good to it—because—because it had been over my picture."

"I am glad you—saw," she said.

It was not true. She was not glad. But she thought she saw an opportunity to make the humiliation of the revelation her impulsiveness had brought upon her a little less poignant.

"I had it here," she said, slowly, and placed her hand over the spot where the rose had lain and warmed itself against her heart. "I was so glad to see the picture which had made the world recognize your merit as an artist. You are quite the greatest man I know, you know. Really you are a very great man, indeed. First you come over here and make them all bow down to you as an artist, and give you prizes and all that. Then you go over to New York and

set the whole world talking about you as a banker and save I don't know how many people from losing money by your clever work. You have dazzled all of us. It is not surprising that I should want a souvenir, is it? You know I told you about the others. Well, I gave this the place of honor. That was because I—like you and—value your friendship so much. Don't you see? Now, please let me have the comfort of knowing that you value mine and trust me. Please—please let me help you. If you would tell me where to look, and how I might know her when I saw her, I would go out and walk the streets and try to help you find her that way," she said, earnestly.

"I could tell you how to know her," said Murdoch, slowly, "if you saw my picture 'Parting' at the studio; she posed for the girl in it."

Miss Markleham closed her eyes a little. She had wondered if the girl in "Parting" had been the one he loved so much. It made it hard for her for a moment, for, even as Lizette had looked at her, and, marvelling at her beauty, had wondered why John Murdoch could have thrown it away to choose only her, Lizette, so when Miss Markleham recalled to her mind the girl in "Parting" she thought with envy of the dainty gracefulness of figure, the small oval face, pathetic in the picture, but full of possibilities of gayety and life; the big brown eyes, wistful in their sorrow; the small hands, drooping limply at her sides. From one of them there had evidently just passed to the soldier lover in the picture the handkerchief which he held tightly to his lips as he looked toward the ground.

"Yes," I remember very well," she said. "She is very pretty. Is that she?"

"Yes."

"Ah! She is very sweet—this love of yours. What is her name?"

"Lizette; Lizette Merrille."

"It is a pretty name."

"It is because I love her so, perhaps, but of all names it seems to me to be the sweetest," said John Murdoch.

Again Miss Markleham arose and went to the window. She could not understand her own emotions—they changed

so swiftly, were so contradictory. She thought of that sweet figure in the picture and the pathetic, grief stricken face which looked backward at the soldier lover in it. And now the grief had really come to her, just as it had come, in the imagination of the artist to the painted girl there in the picture. It was strangely dramatic that she should have posed for that especial picture, "Parting." If Miss Markleham had known the tempest of pity and sympathy which had swept through Lizette's heart that day when she had stood peeping at her own emotion from behind the curtains, she would have been startled by its similarity to the feeling of remorse and pity which filled her own heart now.

"You *must* let me help you," she said, when she turned back again from her gazing out of the window. "There are reasons which you do not know of—a woman's reasons and very good ones—why you must let me help you." Mary Markleham really loved John Murdoch and she could not bear the thought that that other woman who also loved him should have all the privileges of sacrifice. And, besides, her heart went out in pity to Lizette, just as Lizette's had gone out in pity to her that day in the studio. That figure in the picture had appealed very strongly to her when she saw it on the painted canvas. The thought that it was real, and, somewhere, mourning for its love alone, while she was sitting there and talking to him, was dramatic. It was almost tragic.

Murdoch rose and prepared to leave. He said that there were many things which he must do, and, on her earnest pleading, he promised to return and tell her what his progress was and ask her for her help if there were any way in which she could be of assistance to him.

He left the hotel but little wiser than he had been when he had gone there. He knew as he slowly descended the broad staircase why it was the little one had fled from him, but he was no nearer to finding where she was or where to look for her.

CHAPTER XXII.

UNRAVELING THE THREADS.

It had been agreed that Kentucky should remain at the studio until Murdoch's return from his visit to Miss Markleham. They had both hoped against hope that some news might reach him there; that perhaps, even, Lizette might go back there, as she had done that night after her flight from the Moulin Rouge. But no such good tidings greeted Murdoch when he returned to find his old friend sitting gloomily by the fire, with his head bowed in his hands. He listened eagerly to what Murdoch had to tell him. When he had finished (of course, even to Kentucky, Murdoch did not tell the little story of the rose), Kentucky stretched his tall form angrily:

"You see, it was as I said," he grumbled. "There was a woman in it. There always *is* a woman in it. Why couldn't they have stayed away and kept their mouths shut about Fosdyck?"

"They didn't know that Lizette was there, you know, Kentucky," said Murdoch.

"Oh, no," the old student said, complainingly. "This girl, Markleham, didn't know that she was playing hob that night at the Moulin Rouge. She didn't know it, but she played hob quite as effectively as if she had. She has a genius for making trouble without knowing—that girl has."

There was then, and still is, on the detective force of Paris a small, dark man, named Houlier. This is his real name, and I am glad of an opportunity to pay a small tribute to him. I have known of many cases where Houlier has helped puzzled Americans and English folk in Paris. His ability to speak every language that the

modern world has use for makes his selection by the chief almost certain in any case which involves communication with foreigners in Paris or traveling to other countries necessary. Houlier has peculiarities. He is a small man, dark as a Spaniard, and as innocent in appearance as a country urchin bound for Sunday school. He differs from most Frenchmen, in that he never seems to be affected. There is ever an air of genuineness, of complete frankness, about Houlier, which is beautiful to look at and is as thoroughly convincing as it is false. Knowledge of, and, indeed, some slight acquaintance with this astute little prober into mysteries was among those many odds and ends stored in Kentucky's mental garret. He had been thinking of him during Murdoch's absence, and now asked Murdoch if he might go and get him.

"He lives just on the other side of the Gardens here," he said. "If anyone can find her he can. Shall I go and get him?"

"Yes," said Murdoch. And Kentucky went to get him. The old student seemed very bent and feeble as he left the room, and Murdoch forgot his own worry, for a moment, as he looked at him. The man's devotion to Lizette and to him was wonderful. Murdoch thought of it and, rising, hurried to him before he left the room. Kentucky turned at hearing the quick step behind him.

"Is there anything else?" he asked.

"No. Only I wanted to shake hands with you. Not many men have ever known a friendship such as yours, Kentucky. You don't blame me, do you, old man?" asked Murdoch.

"No. Damn it all, I don't. I wish I could. I'd take it out of you. I tried to make out a case against you while you were gone, but there isn't any case to make. I wish there was. I'd like to hammer some one. If I could really blame you, Murdoch, what a licking I would give you. But I can't—and that woman, who has made the whole trouble, apparently—I can't hammer her. And, besides, so far as I can see, she's just as innocent of conscious wrong as you are. That's the trouble. It's such a beastly mix-up. There's no one to be blamed—much. And so

there is no one to be pummeled. I have hopes, though."

They both laughed a little at the extravagance of the talk—small, rueful laughs, that had no real amusement in them, and Kentucky went his way down stairs to find the wise detective.

Kentucky came back, presently, with Houlier. He was most courteously interested while Murdoch told the story, with Kentucky's help. He wished to know especially about Madame Lizette's women friends. She had none? Ah, that was bad. Was there no one? Only the old woman who sold coals. Kentucky spoke of her. He had often noticed that Lizette seemed to like her and talked with her at her shop and when she came to the studio with her supplies.

"This may be bad for us. It seems unlikely that she would tell her secrets to an old woman who sells coals. Still, if she had no other women friends—who knows? Women always tell *some* woman. It is a very pretty story."

The detective leaned back in his chair and puffed his cigarette with keen enjoyment.

"It is a very pretty story," he went on. "It is a story of the emotions wholly. Ah, but it is pretty! And it will not be hard to solve it, I think. Not very hard. The motive is so clear—and very pretty. Very pretty. No, I think it will not be so very hard. Which old woman is it who sells coals? There are many in the Quarter. If it is the one down here on the corner, just beyond the Gardens, I think it will be easy." He stopped in thought, a moment. "Yes. Is it she? Good. I have it. M'sieur Kentucky suggests that there is a woman or a priest responsible for this act. Perhaps there is both a woman and a priest. That old woman has a son—illegitimate—who is not a priest, but who pretends to be studying for the priesthood. I have often seen him. He tries to pose as a religious fanatic. May I see her letter to you—the one in which she told you that she was going away? I should like to see it for myself."

It hurt Murdoch to show it to him, but he did.

The small detective read it with a very serious face and said, when he had finished:

"I do not wonder that you want to find this little one. But do not worry. We shall find her. I am very sorry that I cannot be with you in your journey, but there are matters here in Paris which will keep me from that pleasure. It will, however, be easy. Will you be good enough to ask the old woman who sells coals to come here for a moment? I should wish to see her and to hear her talk. Not that it is necessary for her to see me and hear me talk. Oh, no! Not at all! I can be just invisible somewhere. Most of the people about here know me by my face and know what my little business is. It makes them have embarrassment to talk to me—a little. It is a great pity that one in my business must live somewhere, and somewhere be known to the people of the neighborhood. It handicaps him greatly when it is that he has the work of his profession in that neighborhood."

The small detective let his eyes wander about the room. They rested on the portieres where Lizette had stood concealed that day when Miss Markleham had made confession in the sitting-room.

"Ah! It is very well," he went on with a satisfied shrug of his wiry shoulders. "If you do not have objections, I shall sit just there, within those curtains, while you talk to the old woman who sells coals out here. She will know this room. It is evidently where she brings the coals every day for the stove. Yes, that will be a most excellent arrangement." The small man paused for a moment. Then he glanced at Kentucky. "If you could go to get her—"

Just then there was a sound of a step at the door leading to the stairs and the soft thud of something dropped upon the floor. Then there came a knock.

"Ah!" said Houlier. "It is probably the very person, come with the supply. She has dropped the bag to the floor while she raps upon the door." And, sure enough, there came a rap upon the door. "I shall, with your permission—" and he vanished behind the curtains.

Murdoch opened the door and the old woman who sold coals came in with her bag of coal bricks. She was much impressed by the presence of Murdoch and Kentucky.

She had only that morning heard of their return to Paris. She had been very busy with her own affairs, she said, and for two days had been scarcely at the shop herself, at all. She gave them welcome in voluble French. There seemed to be no need to question her. She was so full of her subject that she started talking of it without the least encouragement or urging.

She was so glad to see them back. Indeed, but it seemed most natural that they should be again in Paris. Still, the studio did not seem natural without P'tite Madame. They would pardon her for saying so, but without P'tite Madame, the studio seemed quite bare and empty.

"When did you see her last?" asked Murdoch. "We were greatly distressed not to find her here when we came. We called at your shop to ask you, but we found it closed. She was fond of you, we knew."

The old woman was learned in the details of many of the Quarter's sordid romances, but this was one of the strangest variations she had ever known of. She had seen students carefully escape from their entanglements in Paris. Many, many, many times she had known the men to go away to their homes beyond the seas, leaving weeping ones behind them. But this! This was not of that kind.

"Ah!" she said to Murdoch. "This is, of the very truth, the strangest of all cases. But it is most marvellous! Here is the case of, not the man, but the girl who runs away and hides. The man—and you are very rich; I have seen you with my eyes with pockets filled with bank notes and in every pocket more bank notes—the man, in this most strange of cases, is the one who seeks and cannot find the girl. She has run away from riches. Of a truth, it is not in the fashion of the Quarter. And more strange yet—she loves you! She loves you so that she must ever talk of you—even to me, the old woman who sells coals. She bought many coals of me after she bought this new stove here. She often spoke of it, and always she seemed to need—even on the warmest days—she seemed to need ever the more coal cakes for it. I said to her one day:

"Madame, you burn much in that new stove. It makes me wish that all my customers had new stoves of that same kind. It is a fine kind—for the old woman who sells coals. It will make me very rich, but it will make you poor."

"Ah!" she said. "I do not burn the coal cakes because it is cold weather. They make my little fire of welcome for him when he shall come. It is so strange about that stove. He is so afraid that I shall take the cold that he bids me ever keep the fire alight in the new stove. Fancy his having fear of that when he is there and I am here, three thousand miles away. And therefore it is that I buy so many coals. Not that it is cold. It is to keep alight the fire of welcome."

"Oh, la, la!" added the old woman who sold coals. "I much wish that I had many customers who had friends like you, who feared that they would take the cold, and for whom fires of welcome must be kept burning."

"Did you know that she was going away?" asked Murdoch.

"Of a certainty. Did she not come to tell me of it and tell me to keep the coals here so that the concierge might have a bright fire in the stove for you when you should come? Yes. She told me that she was to take a long journey."

"Did she say where that journey was to carry her?"

"No. I asked her, but she would not tell me. She was in great distress. And that was strange, for when she took me in the cab—oh, yes, M'sieu, she took me for a drive with her, I do assure you!—she was most happy. And afterwards, when we stopped at the cathedral—she was happy then, too, but solemn." The old woman who sold coals looked archly at John Murdoch, as she went on. "Oh, she loves you very much, does little Madame. She made me pray for you there in the cathedral."

And she told about that prayer in Notre Dame. It is natural with the French to be impressed by the dramatic, and the old woman who sold coals had been so impressed by that episode that she could almost repeat, word for word, what Lizette had told her to repeat in that strange petition to the Holy Virgin there in Notre Dame.

"She made me give the prayer for you," she said. "It was like this." Carried away by the subject and by the interest which her listeners showed, she dropped to her knees and acted out the little episode even to the repetition of the substance of the prayer.

"Do you know whether she went to any priest to talk about the matter?" asked Kentucky, full of his conviction.

It was plain to see that this question agitated the old woman who sold coals. Her eyes jumped nervously to Murdoch's face. There came into her mind a vivid picture of the episode at the baths, when he had ducked the young art student and made him beg her pardon on his bent and sodden knees. She realized that she had said too much. She had not thought ahead. She might have known that this question would be asked if she told about Lizette's sudden access of religious zeal and inquiry. Age may cool the strong fires of friendship. It may soften into a warm glow, hidden by gathering ashes of burned out passion, the ardor of conjugal love. But it never dulls the mother love. She was as fervent in her longing to protect her son this day in the studio as she had been that other day upon the platform of the baths when Murdoch had ducked him in the Seine and forced him to apologize to her for having knocked her teeth out.

She had forgiven Murdoch for that episode. It had been so wholly done for her and had had such strangely salutary influence upon her son's future treatment of her that she could not in her heart fail to thank the American for having given that effective lesson to the one she loved. But it had also made her fear Murdoch. He had been so merciless and so complete in the punishment of the mistaken one's offense, that she regarded him as almost the incarnation of physical power and able, righteous wrath. If he had devised those startling and effective punishments because her son had wronged her—the old woman who sold coals—what might he do to him if the idea gained force in his mind that her son had wronged him—Murdoch—or worse, wrongly influenced Lizette, the one he loved? She was frightened by the trap into which her lack of forethought and her love of the dramatic, quite

as much as her real affection for Lizette and her admiration of the man who loved her, had led her. She tried to lie. She tried to say that, so far as she knew, Lizette had seen no priest. She tried to protect her loved one as a mother dog may strive by simple strategy to avert danger from her litter and court it for herself. She protested weakly that she knew nothing of any priest who had spoken to Lizette. She knew that she had gone to Notre Dame. Yes. Of that she had told the story. But beyond that—she knew nothing.

The lie showed in her face and in her manner. Even Houlier, there behind the curtain, who knew nothing of the episode in the past, saw that she was lying, and pricked up his clever ears. Murdoch and Kentucky, who could see her face, saw it plainly, and the same thought occurred to each of them at once. They let her stutter out her denials of all knowledge of any conversation with a priest, and then Murdoch asked her where her son was. He said "son" plainly, and with such evidence of complete knowledge in his manner that she did not even attempt to play her pretty but transparent little comedy about her relationship to the young man who had been ducked. She did not even protest that she had no son, and assert that the person who had knocked her teeth out on that dramatic day had been a lodger merely. At last she said she did not know just where he was.

"He went back to his studies for the priesthood, did he not, after he left the schools?" asked Murdoch.

"Well, yes," the old woman who sold coals admitted, with a voice that trembled. She was too proud of that fact to make it possible for her to lie about it. Yes. He had gone back to study for the priesthood. It had been a great mistake for him to turn from it to art. He had been fitted for the priesthood by the *bon Dieu*.

She wanted to run away, but did not dare. She knew that Murdoch could learn all about him without very great effort, and she wanted to know—she wanted to stay right there and learn, then—if he intended to go and get him by the collar and again immerse him in the Seine.

Murdoch met Kentucky in a glance of keen intelligence

and suspicion, just awakened. Neither man had much faith in the ability of the young man in question to really become a holy one. Neither believed that the hatred for Murdoch, which he had undoubtedly gulped in with the many muddy mouthfuls of Seine water which the strong one from America had made him drink that day when he really was not thirsty, had wholly left his heart when the water left his stomach.

The old woman was in an agony. Her eyes fastened themselves on Murdoch's hand, that powerful hand which had held her son so helpless on that day after he had beaten her. It still looked strong and capable—that great hand from America.

Kentucky took a hand in the questioning.

"Madame Lizette," he said, slowly, "suddenly became religious and went to Notre Dame with you."

"Yes, M'sieu," said the old woman, glad to have the talk turn for a moment away from what had seemed so very imminent. But in her heart she knew that this was but leading up to what she dreaded.

"Did she not go to your son for religious counsel?"

The old woman, now that the question was fairly put to her, protested wildly. How could that be possible? Why should she go to him? He was not yet a priest. He could not hear confessions nor impose penance. She became almost incoherent in her protestations, for ever there was in her eyes the sight of her dripping son being thrust into the water by Murdoch and pulled out again, half stifled. She was much excited, and her eyes wandered involuntarily to the muscular hands of Murdoch. They could get her to make no admissions. It was evident that she was about to take refuge in tears.

In the meantime Houlier, although ignorant of the generic motive which made the woman hesitate about turning Murdoch's resentment again against her son, but much more clever than either of the other two men in the delicate art of getting human beings to do things against their will, saw that they would fail. So he stepped softly from behind the curtains. The old woman started and looked at him with horror. This was a case where it was well, in-

stead of ill, that all the people in his neighborhood were aware of the nature of his work. Heaven knows what wild ideas floated through the old woman's brain as she saw this representative of the law appear from the place where it was evident that he had been in hiding. To her it seemed as mysterious as the action of the trap-doors in the stage seem to children who go to see the pantomime at Christmas time. She was amazed, appalled! This man represented to her the harsh arm of authority. The sight of him brought visions of the black wagon in which prisoners are driven to and from the courts of proceedings before judges; yes, of dark and frowning prison walls. Surely, there was nothing in anything her son could have done in talking with the girl which would justify any legal process. She must say so. Better to risk the action of the strong American's fierce hands than to cast a suspicion on her loved one in the eyes of this minion of the dreaded law. She hesitated. Houlier spoke. His voice was soft and comforting. There was real art in the attitude he so readily assumed.

"Do not be worried, Madame," he said, with calmness. "There is nothing over which one needs to worry. When was it that your son saw and talked with P'tite Madame?"

There was a finality about his assumption that he had seen and talked with her, and a frigid fearsomeness in the way he spoke of him as her son. It was like to knowledge. She had felt almost helpless with the others, after she had told them what she had. But against this new and unexpected and most fearsome one she could not resist at all. She felt it necessary to defend her son, but Houlier reassured her. He said that, of course, if P'tite Madame had gone to him it had been his duty to talk to her. Certainly, none could blame him for the performance of his duty.

The old woman looked tremblingly at Murdoch.

If M'sieu would promise not again to dip him in the Seine! Oh, it had been terrible that day when M'sieu had dipped him in the Seine! He had been all dampened by it. And it is not good to be so dampened! He had been humiliated by it. And it is most terrible to be so greatly

humbled. His strong spirit could not endure such things. It hurt him in the heart of him. If M'sieu would promise—

So Murdoch promised. But it was not much that the old woman could tell. She admitted that Lizette had seen her son, and asked advice of him. He had not told her much about it; nothing, indeed, beyond that fact.

"Where is he now?" asked Murdoch.

"Who knows?" she answered.

But this answer would not do. Houlier took a brief hand in the questioning again. This terrified her, but made her speak. She admitted that he was among those assisting the fathers detailed at the Gare de Lyons to aid in sending the pilgrims off for Lourdes.

It was evident that she could tell no more, so Murdoch thanked her with one of those magical bank notes of his and she hurried off.

It was Kentucky who suggested that there was some necessity for haste in their own actions. He cleverly believed that she would hurry to the station, repentant of her revelations, and that her son, warned and reminiscent of what had happened to him once before, might think of duties which would call him quickly elsewhere.

So a cab was called and the three men climbed into it with haste. The driver was induced to hurry by means of certain money transfers and promises of others yet to come, and they rattled by the most direct routes to the low building from which trains begin their journey from Paris to the south of France.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE ROAD TO LOURDES.

Their business at the station did not occupy them long. As soon as they drew up to the crowded platform, Houlier directed them to one of the retiring rooms, saying that he would bring the object of their search to meet them there.

It was astonishing to see the ease with which the small detective writhed his way through the crowd that blocked the doors leading to the station. It was plain that every gendarme knew him, and did what he could to open up a path for him, but none appeared to recognize him. There was no particular necessity for this minute care for detail. But it was what would be done upon the stage, and the French policeman's basic notion is to do in real life what would be done upon the stage, just as the constant effort of the new school of actors is to do upon the stage what would be done in real life.

Houlier had small difficulty in finding the son of the old woman who sold coals and at once brought him to the room where Murdoch and Kentucky were waiting. The student evidently was surprised and somewhat disconcerted to find who it was that awaited him, but he assumed an air of cool insolence toward them and it is not likely that they would have got any information out of him except for the presence of Houlier. He seemed almost as much in awe of the little detective as the old woman had been. His mind vividly dwelt upon the possibility that if he proved stubborn, Murdoch might lodge a complaint against him for that knife thrust given long ago. And when Houlier said to him in a tone of polite insistence that left room for only one answer, "I am sure that Monsieur le Pere will give us all assistance in his power," he

made up his mind that it would be better to appear perfectly frank. Of course, Houlier knew that he was not a priest, but it was a matter of habit with the detective to be extremely polite when he was in search of information, so he addressed the student as Monsieur le Pere.

In reply to their questions the student admitted that Madame Lizette had spoken to him. She had seemed to be in trouble and sought a sign from the Blessed Virgin. She had asked him about Lourdes (this was a lie, but he could not bring himself to tell quite the truth) and he had told her that many went there and were rewarded for the going. He lied again by telling them that she had left that very morning. It was his secret hope that Murdoch would follow her, and, on reaching Lourdes, would find that she had returned to Paris, and so be put to further trouble.

In answer to questions put by the detective, the student told him as well as might be how best to go about finding her when Murdoch should go to Lourdes; but he said, with truth, that this might prove to be a difficult affair. Finally all three decided that they had learned all that he could or would tell them about the matter, and Houlier told him curtly that he might go. That was another of the small man's peculiarities. He could ever mask his contempt for an unworthy person so long as it was wise or politic to mask it; but when that time passed it gave him a certain satisfaction to speak and act when dealing with a dog in a way that showed that he knew and recognized the breed.

It was arranged that Murdoch and Kentucky should go at once to Lourdes. Houlier expressed his regret that he could not accompany them. There were matters here in Paris that required his attention. At any rate their task ought not to be difficult as the crowds, though very large, were greatly concentrated. He promised, too, that he would ask the local police to assist them, although it was not likely that they could be relied upon for much help at such a time, as the incompetence usual to a provincial police force was increased by the necessity for dealing with the throngs that flocked to the pilgrimage.

The arrangements were quickly made. Kentucky went

to engage their tickets. Houlier arranged to have a close watch kept at the studio in case Lizette should appear before they returned from their southern journey. Murdoch sent some letters and cables explaining that his stay abroad might be prolonged beyond his original intentions. Then he went to call on Miss Markleham in fulfilment of his promise to keep her informed of the progress of his search. She had evidently schooled herself for the meeting with Murdoch and she showed signs of real pleasure when he told her that Houlier felt confident that they would find the little one without great difficulty if they went to Lourdes. She expressed satisfaction over the fact that his journey would lie in the same direction in which her aunt had planned to have theirs lead, and it was, of course, arranged that they should make the trip together.

In all the world there is nothing else like the annual pilgrimage to Lourdes. Each year it occurs in August, and sometimes as many as sixty thousand devout believers journey to that quaint valley in the foothills of the Pyrenees, where Bernadotte Soubirous avowed that the Virgin appeared to her in a crevice of the rocks, and, blessing the water which flowed in a tiny stream from a grotto just beneath her holy feet, gave the message to the shepherd girl that there might the weary find real rest; there might the sorrowful find everlasting joy; there might sterile womanhood be made fruitful; there might the sick be made well again; there might the maimed be cured. So great was the rush of pilgrims to the shrine, after the story had had the formal approval of the Church, that the Government itself was forced to take cognizance of the matter and assume a certain supervision over the ecclesiastically arranged pilgrimages, which, in going from Paris, must travel over a government line of railroad. Strange sights are seen about the station at the season of the pilgrimage —strange sights and pitiful. Murdoch and Kentucky had had no time to look at them when they had gone there in the morning with the detective, but now, when they were forced to work their way through the great crowd, giving what measure of protection was in their power to the two women, they looked and marveled, shuddering.

The government trains, with their many sections—there are officially but two trains, the “White” and the “Blue,” so called from the color of the garb of the sisters who attend upon the pilgrims, but so great is the pilgrimage that these two trains are perforce divided into many sections—had been leaving for three days. There was but one section to leave, but that was slow in starting and delayed the regular passenger train on which Murdoch’s party was to leave. Indeed, it was nearly midnight when the self-important guards began to stride up and down the station platform with their pompous cries of “*en voiture si'l vous plait*” (in carriages, if you please), when the pillow renters pushed their little carts along for the last time with their dismal wailing of “*Oreiller! oreiller! oreiller!*” when the luncheon vendors and the beer and wine sellers, with their baskets, made their last noisy rounds, when the little men, who pretend to sell indecent photographs, but really ply a trade in most innocent little pictures, and who have an especial eye for Americans as being particularly seeking for wicked things when they visit Paris, winked for the time their last wicked winks at prospective customers. But finally, the long train started its slow crawl out of the dingy station. It had been a distinct relief for Murdoch that it had been impossible for him to find places so that the whole party could make the journey in the same carriage. By lavish bribery he secured a fairly comfortable location for the two women, while he and Kentucky were forced to be content with places in a crowded compartment in another part of the train.

The journey from Paris to Tarascon, where one must change for Lourdes, is but a weary one at best. And beyond Tarascon the monotony of the journey is not made much more bearable by the occasional sight of great hills verging into mountains and pleasant valleys. But at the time of the pilgrimage this trip has new horrors added to it, even in the first-class carriages on the regular trains, which are not devoted to the pilgrimage by the management. There are prosperous folk, as well as paupers, among the pilgrims who go each year to Lourdes, and even as the “White” train and the “Blue” train are filled by

those who must of necessity travel cheaply, the regular and more expensive trains are crowded by those whose money cannot stop their suffering, or who must perforce consult the Holy Virgin in hope of surcease from some sorrow which the contents of their pocketbooks has proved powerless to assuage. The sick are everywhere. Extra baggage vans are added to the regular trains to bear their special burdens of sick on stretchers, sick on mattresses, sick in wheeled chairs, sick in boxes like enough to coffins to seem strikingly prophetic. And in the compartments of the passenger carriages are ever to be found at this season of the year large numbers of the prosperous, and even some in sturdy health, who still have favors to beg of Heaven and who fear that their petitions will remain unanswered unless the especial Virgin, "Our Lady of Lourdes," shall intercede with God for them.

There were eight pilgrims in the compartment in which Murdoch and Kentucky traveled. All of them were in that state of mental excitement which might reasonably be expected of those bound on such errands to such a place at such a time. Two were a rich pair, who took their parish priest with them as extra aid. This young man was keyed up to a great pitch of emotional intensity by the journey and its object. His charges each bore crucifixes richly carved in ivory, and while the priest chanted his "Ave Marias" and "Misericordias," he held as high up as the car roof would permit a third and larger image of the Christ upon the cross, to which the devotions of the other pilgrims turned especially.

"Oh, Lord! Give us a child!" was the husband's monotonous utterance, while the priest chanted; or else he made the responses to the cleric's prayers. And "Oh, Lord! Grant me a son!" the poor wife prayed a thousand times, oblivious in her earnestness of onlookers, careless of everything except the hope that her petition might be heard and answered in the Heavens.

It was impressive, but it was pitiful. It was real and earnest, but it was hard for the Americans, unused to public exhibition of emotion, to recognize its dignity. Whenever the train stopped, and its stops were long and fre-

quent, there went up from all the carriages a mighty chant, which sometimes continued after the train had started on again, so hearty in its mighty volume that it was heard above the roaring wheels and the rattle of the cars.

There was a skeptic in the compartment, who, for a long time, sat silent in his corner and gazed with scorn. Once he started to speak with sarcasm and laughed boorishly. Then Kentucky, mighty in his height and with his ungainliness changed to dignity of bearing, rose with stretching joints and told him, both in French and English, to shut up. So stern was the American's lank face, so evident the tenseness of his muscles, that the scoffing Frenchman ceased his ridicule and sat silent in a corner until the train stopped at a station. Then he gave the guard five francs to find for him a place in other and more congenial company, which, perhaps, was well for him.

In the middle of the night the man and his wife left also. The guard had found for them a place nearer to the chanting. Other changes finally left Kentucky and Murdoch alone together. Neither one so much as dozed. The delicate imagination of Kentucky and even the more practical mind of Murdoch had not failed to be impressed by the tremendous spectacle of the pilgrimage. One does not need to be devout, or even to believe at all, to see the dignity of this solemn turning of the thousands to their Maker. And its pathos, its most piteous pathos, was everywhere about them. For many of those who make the pilgrimage it is their very last appeal. For hundreds the cries which they will make before the grotto will be the last cries, the petitions which they will put up at Lourdes the last prayers of Hope almost despairing and doomed to bitter disappointment. Doctors have failed, medicines have failed—everything has failed. Only the suffering has gone on, and on, and on. The Virgin, merciful incarnation of love, soul of that most divine of human attributes, motherhood, incarnation of Divine power—for did not Christ, Himself, come from her?—may, in the glory of her Heavenly pity, in the tenderness of that love for all humanity taught by her Blessed Son, intercede with Him

to save! Alas! In most of the pilgrimages to Lourdes the number upon whom she bestows that grand compassion seems pitifully small.

Murdoch and Kentucky, aliens in this band of the exalted, felt free to talk after they had been left alone.

"It impresses me tremendously," said Murdoch. "Think how this journey must have affected her! Innocent, impressionable child, ignorant of most of the great truths of religion, but familiar with the gaudy show which France makes in its name, knowing of its promises very dimly, and, perhaps, exaggerating them or taking them too literally, impressed by the fear that she might harm me by going home with me, and tortured by the anticipated torment of separation if she did not, humbled, heart sick and confused, such a trip as this in such surroundings is almost calculated to drive her wits away. Oh, it is pitiful to think of!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE GREAT PILGRIMAGE.

The narrow road to the village from the station at Lourdes curves down a steep incline. The village, straggling upward, edges it with tall houses so eagerly that there is scarcely room on either side for sidewalks, and at the time of a pilgrimage what small space there is is utterly insufficient to accommodate the walking crowds. They swarm into and fill the driveway with unfortunates, who pour in a black and gruesome stream from the carriages of the railway trains. Some walk alone. Some hobble on canes and crutches. Some stumble dangerously from weakness after the hard journey's great fatigue. Many are assisted on their tottering way by priests and hospital-lers. Hundreds cannot walk at all and must be taken down in chairs with wheels, borne prone on litters, or carried in those strange, long boxes which look so much like coffins. It is a harvest time for the thrifty folk of Lourdes, who have come to regard this influx of the miserable with hardened hearts. To them a man who cannot walk is one who can, perhaps, pay well for being carried. To them a woman, gasping in the throes of pain, arouses pity in proportion to the contents of her purse. They are not worse than other people in the main, but long familiarity with the horrid sights of suffering has bred what may not be contempt, perhaps, but certainly is callousness.

Miss Markleham and her aunt had engaged rooms by telegraph, but they were forced to walk to the gray-stone hotel, nearly a mile away, because all vehicles were engaged in the moving of the pilgrims. Murdoch and Kentucky went with them, of course, and saw them safe inside the doors. Then they began their search. The crowds almost discouraged them, but a very little study showed them that they were, as Houlier said, concentrated in a few spots,

which made the inspection of them much easier than it otherwise might have been. The detective had telegraphed to the local police and Murdoch found a report waiting for him at the office. They had, as far as possible, investigated the lists of the hotels, and had examined the returns of such pensions or boarding houses as complied with the government regulation that returns of arriving and departing guests shall be made each day to the police. This regulation is supposed to be in force throughout France, but there is no belief, even on the part of the police, that it is rigidly enough enforced at Lourdes, during the times of the pilgrimages to make its returns accurate records.

Aside from this they had done nothing and this work had had no good result.

Murdoch quickly saw that he could look to them for very little useful help. He gave them up.

With Kentucky he started out to learn, himself, about the field that they must search without official aid. It was quickly evident that there were four points to watch. First, of course, was the space before the grotto. There the pilgrims swarmed. High up in a niche in the rocks above the cave the little statue of the Virgin stands robed in blue and white and gold, the object of the thousands' veneration. This seemed to be the most likely spot of all, and the two friends decided that it was better for Kentucky to be there than it would be for Murdoch to take the post. Lizette, they thought, would surely make no effort to run away from old Kentucky. Murdoch thought with a pang that she might try to run away from him.

The Basilica was to be closely watched and the Bureau des Contestationes, where those who have been made the objects of healing miracles, hurry to have their cures officially investigated and the proofs recorded. This small office is in an archway in the stone incline leading up to the Basilica, and, after a cure, or the rumor of a cure, is always the center of a crowd whose members press and peer and try to get stolen glimpses of the fortunate object of the Virgin's mercy.

Stretching along the level ground upon the Loire's right

bank and directly in front of the Basilica's lofty perch upon the precipitous hillside, is a kind of park, marked with a great cinder pathway, which curves almost in the shape of an elongated race track. Within the further curve there rises a great cross, which, at night time, is illuminated with blazing gas, and shines, a gigantic, flaming, turning post for the processions of taper-bearing pilgrims, who march, chanting with their myriad of paper-sheltered lighted candles, in an endless line around the course, until weariness or weakness brought by sickness, forces them to drop out of the devotional parade.

Murdoch had no worry about the town itself. Lizette would be unlikely to loiter among the unattractive boarding houses or the souvenir and food shops which principally make it up. She had gone there to pray and those who pray remain near the entrance to the grotto, or in the Basilica, or march in the processions.

During the two or three hours of daylight which still remained after he had left Kentucky at the grotto's mouth, Murdoch made what search he could of hotels and boarding houses, but so great was the confusion consequent upon the vast number of people which their inadequate accommodations were forced for these few days of the year only to shelter, that he found that there was scarcely a pretense among them of observing the police regulations, and even a house-to-house canvass had no result except to worry and discourage him.

He called again at the little office of the police, but only to decide again that with their press of work they would be unlikely to be of use to him, although Houlier's telegrams had undoubtedly impressed them with the importance of the case, an impression which Murdoch deepened by the deposit with the officer in charge of some of those wondrous banknotes which had so impressed the old woman who sold coals.

The crowds were terrible and crushing in their magnitude and in the selfishness born of complete earnestness. Murdoch wandered from place to place and watched strange faces until his eyes were tired with his anxious looking. Then he went to find Miss Markleham and her

aunt and took them to the grotto, in accordance with the engagement which they had made on their arrival.

When night fell, dark and damp, upon the village and its restless crowds of devotees, Murdoch placed himself near to the turning point of the procession at the blazing cross. The pilgrims marched in pairs, with their procession often broken by some weak and weary one who could not keep up, and, lagging, delayed those who were behind. There were all sorts and all conditions in the endless line, from the refined women of the old regime in France, who walked with innate grace and faces closely veiled, to the crippled peasant from the mountains whose presence there had, perhaps, for years before, necessitated such scant expenditure on other things that the suppliant's clothes hung in ragged testimony to the sacrifices he had made, and whose face showed traces of starvation.

There were those who had taken strange and uncouth vows, such as to let their hair or beards grow without the touch of comb or scissors, until they should present their prayers to the Holy One at Lourdes.

One man bore upon his back a great rough timber cross, and, in devotion which seemed like most horrible irreverence to the onlooker, wore upon his brow a wreath of thorns which had torn his forehead's skin until the blood, not washed away for many weeks, had covered his whole face and neck and made him a frightful object. He had marched with the burden and the disfiguring chaplet, all the way from Calais, in the North of France, and had been months upon the road. Behind him came his two brothers, both grown men, who carried between them a handled box in which lay their little sister, a paralytic. Marching next to them were the father and the mother, aged peasants, bowed by woe and the awful effort of the journey, with eyes uplifted and trembling limbs, chanting their Ave Marias with voices shaking from emotion. This dreadful family party, sublime in its grotesque devotion, touched Murdoch deeply. They made the circuit of the long path thrice and then dropped out, unable to bear their burdens farther for the time, and rested in complete exhaustion on the grass not far from Murdoch.

He spoke to them.

Only the one who bore the cross would answer him. The others, wrapt in the fervor of their prayers and meditation, probably did not even hear him.

He asked this man when they had eaten last.

It had been a long time.

He asked him how they would get back to their far distant home.

The way they came, he thought, unless the Blessed Virgin found for them an easier one.

He said that the old man and woman seemed almost exhausted.

Oh, yes. They had not slept or eaten since the day before.

He asked if they would accept a gift of money from him.

They would accept it gladly and with gratitude.

Murdoch gave the money to the one who bore the cross and he spoke to the others of the gift. They looked at Murdoch gratefully and said a prayer for him.

Then the one who bore the cross struggled painfully away, with the money tightly clenched within his hand. Fifteen minutes later he came back. His face was lighted by a smile of satisfaction, but Murdoch noticed that he brought back no food. A glance at the mother's face made the American fear that if she did not have some sustenance other than religious fervor soon, she would fall fainting where she sat. He asked the messenger, who had taken the money away with him, where the food was. He must give it to the old woman quickly and perhaps a drop of wine might keep her from fainting.

The man looked at Murdoch in surprise.

Food? Wine? He had bought no food and wine. He had used the money to buy candles to burn before the shrine within the grotto. They had not come to Lourdes to eat and drink. They had come to pray!

And all the time the procession, with its chanting thousands, was winding slowly past, around the cross and back to the Basilica, around the cross and back to the Basilica.

Sometimes a little section of it stopped, while the hospitallers took some person who had fainted and bore him

back with them into the village on a litter. Once during the evening they carried back with them a woman who was dead. The other pilgrims saw that she was dead as she was carried past them, but it had no effect upon their fervor except, perhaps, to heighten it. The Holy One had answered her poor prayers with the gift of everlasting rest. Hail Holy One!

And the slow march went on to the solemn music of the chanting thousands.

These and many other sadnesses, Murdoch saw and marvelled over. All kinds of men and women passed before him in a strange, moving show, almost incredible in its weird variety. But search as he would, he could never see that one face for which he looked so earnestly. His eyes smarted from continued staring in the flickering light. The candles of the passing devotees sometimes seemed to make the marchers dance up and down before him as they passed, sometimes they seemed to jump forward with a jerk as they reached his station and fall back again into their accustomed pace only after they had passed him by.

Three times as the strange line of pilgrims slowly passed before him, he thought he saw, far down the line, a face or figure which seemed to him like that he looked for. But three times he was disappointed.

There was in his heart the constant fear that some person might pass him without inspection. There were so many of them and the light was so uncertain! The mental strain told upon him and the fear that it might make him careless in his inspection of the throng became a constant worry.

One figure, veiled heavily and marching with bowed head, twice attracted him as it passed by its similarity to hers and he almost stepped up to call her name when it appeared the third time, but by chance the veil was raised before he spoke and he saw that he had been mistaken.

The procession passed and passed in all its show of grief and horrid suffering, of faith and high devotion. The great bells of the Basilica had chimed for eleven o'clock before the dimming of the lights upon the Cross made the procession break up and swarm back again to the space be-

fore the grotto. He went with the crowd and wormed his way among its members, searching ever, searching vainly.

Many were too tired to follow the slow and solemn march of the procession with a night of prayer before the grotto, but enough persisted in their purpose of petition to pack the small space tightly. Murdoch found Kentucky there. The old student was tired by the strain, but the excitement and enthusiasm of the scene and its strange actors had keyed him to a pitch of high intensity, and, although Murdoch urged it, he would not go back to the hotel to sleep. Miss Markleham was there with her aunt and, like Kentucky, she was much excited by it all, and her eyes gazed solemnly from deep hollows. The aunt, much less affected in reality, pretended to be more so, and remained kneeling on the stones while her niece talked to Murdoch. It was midnight before the ladies went to their hotel, and before they left Miss Markleham called Murdoch to the shadow of a tree, where the flickering glare from the myriads of candles cast dancing shadows. She said nothing to him at first, but looked into his eyes and smiled a sadly solemn little smile.

"I am so sorry for you both," she said. "I do not often pray. Before I learned of your distress, I thought of Lourdes with curiosity and not devotion. But I have prayed to-night, prayed earnestly for you and for your little one. Good night."

She touched his hand and vanished.

There were good things in Mary Markleham. Her efforts to help the man she loved find poor Lizette had in them some of the nobility of martyrdom.

Murdoch kneeled beside Kentucky at a bench. The space before the grotto was still crowded, as the clock in the Basilica tower struck midnight. The priests' bells tinkled every fifteen minutes before they said their prayers.

There were some dramatic incidents. A woman fell before the iron gate which bars the crowd out from the grotto and writhed there on the stones in frightful pain. A priest hurried to her and gave her the last sacrament before she died. Then hospitallers took her wasted form away. Her prayers were answered.

Sometimes the pilgrims whispered to each other in the pauses of devotion. There was a story, which gained detail as it passed from mouth to mouth, of a cure that afternoon. The pilgrims grasped it eagerly and rolled the tale beneath their tongues with deep soul-hunger. It lacked certain confirmation and the anxious one, unable to control his longing for the truth about it, made a journey to the Bureau des Contestationes, from which he returned with the news that the doors were locked. This seemed strange and doubtful to another pilgrim. Was not the Blessed Virgin as likely to make cures at night as during day? He could not believe that the Bureau's doors were locked. There must be some mistake. He went, himself, to see. Returning, fifteen minutes later, he confirmed the first. Yes, the doors were locked.

This seemed to damp the hope of some and they got up from their knees and went away to sleep, perhaps to hotels and boarding houses, perhaps to that barren shelter which the Church furnishes without charge to those who cannot pay. By three o'clock there were no more than fifty left before the grotto. By five, most of these had gone, and with them Murdoch went. He knew Lizette was not among them and he woke Kentucky, whose head had sunk in slumber on a bench beside which he was kneeling. To have stood among those pilgrims would have seemed like sacrilege.

They made their plans as they went to their hotel. Kentucky was to sleep till noon. He agreed to this reluctantly, and only because he knew, himself, that it was necessary. His great and overpowering weariness told him too plainly that he could not stand such strain as ably as the younger man.

CHAPTER XXV.

FACE TO FACE.

Murdoch was out and again before the grotto by nine o'clock. His sleep had been restless and disturbed. In the room adjoining his some poor consumptive struggled with a racking cough. As he went out into the little garden back of the hotel to get his morning coffee, he met a group of hospitallers carrying that sort of burden which is so often seen at Lourdes at times of pilgrimages. It was the body of the one who in the night had coughed, the waiter told him. There is a pilgrims' cemetery there at Lourdes, and it has many occupants.

The second day passed as the first had passed. Murdoch kept in telegraphic communication with Houlier. They both considered it most likely that if Lizette should go away from Lourdes she would return to Paris, and neither one believed that she could go there without at least a visit to the studio. So Houlier had the place watched constantly. But his message brought no good news to Murdoch.

Murdoch watched the grotto. The first keen impressions of the place had begun thus soon to be dulled in him. Denied the vivid intensity of religious fervor and with the dramatic instincts of his artist nature cloyed within him from too much feeding on the sights of yesterday, the spectacle became monotonous. He called at the office of the police. They were polite, but had no news. Their energies were centered on a search for pickpockets, who had come down from Paris in an organized gang to wring plunder from the pilgrims. They had not found Lizette.

He went to the Basilica. There were few worshippers within, and Lizette was not among them. Before the

grotto the crowds were becoming dense, but they were still thin enough so that he could search among them and feel when he had finished what satisfaction he could get out of the conviction that the small one was not among them.

The strain had made his face look pale, and he knew that his eyes were surrounded by great yellow hollows. At noon Kentucky joined him. The old student looked pitifully weak and tired, and acted like a discouraged man, but tried to smile and appear hopeful when he saw the marks of weariness and worry on the face of Murdoch.

It was afternoon before Miss Markleham and her aunt appeared. They asked no questions. The faces of the two friends answered them, unspoken. They did not even stop to talk to Murdoch. Miss Markleham looked tired, as if her night, too, had passed without a right allowance of restful sleep. She smiled faintly at Murdoch and kneeled with her aunt at a bench close to the grotto.

The sun beat hot upon the bowed heads of the pilgrims. An early morning shower had left small pools of water standing in the hollows of the stones which paved the space before the grotto. But no one cared for this, and by ten o'clock the space was filled by praying thousands. The priests' bell tinkled as they said the masses. The sisters passed among the people, giving comfort to the anxious ones. Sometimes they kindly cared for some woman who had fainted. Sometimes they bore out of the crowd some little one whose weakness could no longer stand the strain. Once or twice a great chorus started and for a time echoed up against the towering rocks above for a few moments, to give way to that strange, whisper-pierced silence of the multitude which had preceded it.

Murdoch, as he knelt, scanned faces eagerly. He was so situated that he could see those who came and those who went, but those in front of him kept their faces ever toward the grotto and were a tantalizing mystery. Sometimes there seemed to be something in the curve of a kneeling figure's form which seemed to him like Lizette's, and with infinite pains he worked through the crowd, always on his knees, as was most necessary, until he could

satisfy himself that he had been mistaken. And that satisfaction ever came too soon.

Once or twice during the morning he left his post for Kentucky to keep watch of and made again the rounds of the Basilica, the police station and the railroad depot. But each time he returned to the space before the grotto, still without news.

The monotony of the chants, and the great weariness, which came from the really tremendous physical strain of the week past, had tired him almost beyond endurance, and he often drowsed as he kneeled, to come to full consciousness with little starts of fear that he had slept, and that while he slumbered she might have come and gone. It was during one of these periods of semi-consciousness that he was roused by a touch upon his arm, and found Miss Markleham kneeling close beside him. He had not seen her come, yet he had had no knowledge that he had been asleep. Her grasp tightened on his arm. She bowed her head, but still looked up at him and placed her fingers on her lips. She leaned toward him and whispered.

"Don't get up. Don't say anything. I have found her. She is over there."

Miss Markleham pointed with her hand held low behind a pilgrim's back.

"I am sure that it is she," she continued, tensely. "I saw her face quite plainly and it is the face of 'Parting.' She is kneeling by a bench. There is a vacant place beside her. Go there and kneel by her. It will be an answer to her prayers."

Slowly, Murdoch worked his way through the great crowd. Miss Markleham crept on her knees behind him. She pointed out to him the figure that she meant. He gave her a great and glowing glance of gratitude. It was Lizette.

Sometimes he could not see her as he worked along upon his knees. His progress was tormenting in its slowness. But each time that he came into a position where her figure was not hidden by intervening worshippers, the certainty grew in him that it was she. Slowly, slowly, slowly, he worked his way until scarcely twenty feet inter-

vened between them. Miss Markleham's plan appealed to him. The small one had come to Lourdes to pray, and he knew that all her prayers were for him, and that the greatest answer which she begged so humbly of the Blessed Virgin was assurance that without endangering his happiness she might turn to him and cling forever to him. Her head was bowed. Her hands were clasped before her. A moving figure shut her from his sight for a second, and when it passed her head was raised, her hands stretched out in supplication to that statue of the Virgin above her and before her. She dropped them.

A woman who was between her and Murdoch was moaning with a fervor which increased. Slowly many turned to see what caused the strange sounds that came from her. Her hands were upraised, and on her face there was a look of ecstasy. She seemed to be slowly rising from her knees without the movements ordinary to such an effort. The worshippers, disturbed by the tremulous intensity of the strange sound which she made, a quivering, shaking tremolo, which might be either a note of overwhelming joy or the last, half-hushed, despairing cry of one who perished, turned toward her.

Lizette, attracted by the sound, as were the others, turned and looked, and, as she looked, saw Murdoch. A great light came into her face. First, a flushing red swept over it. Then came a startling pallor. Then the red again.

Murdoch stretched his arms out toward her. The tense excitement of his own drama took his interest away from that woman who was now rising, rising; with that strange, unnatural movement that seemed not to be the ordinary work of human muscles. He called aloud:

"Lizette!"

She answered him:

"Oh, Pudgy!"

She almost rose with arms outstretched to go to him. What quick thoughts flashed themselves through that simple, loving brain in those few seconds! Surely, the Virgin Mary had answered all her prayers, had sent her dear one to her as the greatest and most satisfying of all answers!

Her eyes were fixed on Murdoch's face with an ecstasy almost as great as the uncanny expression of that other woman's eyes, who was now slowly, slowly, rising up between them.

Lizette stretched out her arms toward him, and as she did so, the other one, who had not stood for twenty years, rose wholly, with a queer, piercing cry.

"Je suis gu-e-r-i-e—Je suis g-u-e-r-i-e!"

She shrieked it slowly between tense lips and waved her arms. She had risen exactly between the lovers, and stood there with arms stretched wildly out as if she threw away the sickness which had so long oppressed her.

For a moment the crowd stopped where it was, as if in petrification. Then, with a wild shout of "*La guerison!*" "*La guerison!*" (the cure! the cure!) it rushed madly up to crowd around the object of the miracle. Murdoch had scarcely comprehended. His own joy was so great that he could not have eyes or ears for anything besides it. And as he paused the crowd rushed over him and bore him down.

He saw Lizette's arm drop, and saw her face change from joy to despair as she looked beyond him, and then the instinct of self-preservation made him shield his face and eyes from maddened feet.

He was in real danger, for the crowd was frantic. A dozen men and women swept over him. It was Miss Markleham, who was just behind him and who had already risen to her feet, who made them keep a little clear of him. She even helped him rise by putting down her hands to him. He struggled, dazed and dirty, to his feet.

In his rising he had turned around, and when he turned back to where Lizette had been there was a sea of faces there in which he could not see her face at all. There was a struggling swarm of bodies there, but he could not see among them the small and delicate form he hungered for.

Almost in a twinkling the place was cleared of all except the wholly helpless and himself and Mary Markleham. Everyone who had the strength to run was panting in pursuit of the weird figure of the risen one, who trailed

her long wraps behind her and ran screaming with a joy almost demoniacal toward the Bureau des Contestationes. Only he and Mary Markleham remained, with puzzled eyes, watching the crowd as it hurried on its frantic way, pursued by a great column of yellow dust, following the object of the miracle.

In that little moment he had lost Lizette again, and he could not find her anywhere. The rushing crowd had swept her with it while he struggled on the stones to get his footing. It was like a disappearance of a fairy on the stage. He could not tell what to make of it.

"Where is she?" asked Miss Markleham.

"She was there," said Murdoch, pointing. "She was just there when the crowd pushed me over. But when I rose and turned she had gone. She must have been carried with it."

Murdoch hurried to the outskirts of the crowd which surged about the office of the doctors who are supposed to pass on miracles and attest to them. It was impossible for him to penetrate it. He did not believe that she had been carried into its inner circles. It would have been almost impossible for her to have been swept, unwillingly, so far from where she had been kneeling when he saw her just before he fell.

Kentucky and Miss Markleham were with him. They watched upon the outskirts of the crowd until, disintegrating and disappearing like sugar in warm water, it had gone. Most of those who had so madly rushed to the Bureau in the wake of the woman who had known the miracle, went back to the grotto to pray with renewed fervor. Many gathered about the grounds in small groups to talk about the wonder before they returned to their own devotions, to marvel over it and to get new hope from it, but nowhere could they find trace of the little one whom they sought so earnestly. It came with almost as great a shock as had been the first quick knowledge that she had run away when Murdoch read her note in the studio in Paris.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MISS MARKLEHAM AGAIN.

Again the weary search began.

Kentucky was dismayed by this new and most mysterious disappearance. He could not understand it, nor could Murdoch.

Miss Markleham's presence was demanded by the aunt, who professed entire exhaustion after the excitement of the miracle.

Miss Markleham really knew what had happened, and she was glad that her aunt was so nervous that she could not leave her. She shrank from seeing Murdoch. There was an agony in her mind such as a criminal might feel at the prospect of meeting the one who suffered through his crime. She had not wronged him knowingly—but yet, but yet—she could not look at his sorrow-stricken face without a feeling of deep guilt.

She had seen the expression of Lizette's eyes just before the crowd rushed up between her and her loved one as it cast Murdoch down. She had seen that look of joy on Lizette's face as the small one caught sight of Murdoch and had seen it change to worry and then almost to terror, as the eyes caught sight of her—Miss Markleham.

Lizette's face had been very white as if from physical exhaustion when she had first seen her and before the little one had known that they were there. It had been strained and worried in its look with that same extraordinary intensity of expression which seemed to mark the faces of all the pilgrims, a look which Miss Markleham had never seen before and which she recognized through the intensity of her own great love, unsatisfied and hopeless.

In her heart she had known that it had been her own

presence which had changed that look of joy ineffable that had come to Lizette's face when first she had caught sight of Murdoch. Her woman's sympathies and intuitions were quicker even than Murdoch's understanding, born of love. She tried to piece together in her own mind the emotions which must have filled Lizette's heart, and she was more accurate in her thinking than she dreamed. She was certain that Lizette had come to Lourdes to pray about John Murdoch, that she had been waiting for the answer to her prayer while she knelt before the grotto and when they approached. Miss Markleham could see how John Murdoch's presence there had at first been taken by Lizette for the very greatest and most satisfying of all answers to her prayers. That explained the look of supreme joy which flashed across her face when first she saw him. But she could also see how the fact that *she* was there with Murdoch might have been taken by the small one for a later and more complete answer, a crushing, horrifying answer which crushed her hopes and left her bruised and broken in her spirit and with bleeding heart.

"It seems to me," she whispered to herself, "that I should hate a God that gave me such reply in such a way!"

She shrunk within her soul as she tried to paint the agony of Lizette's inward being when the conviction came upon her that her prayer was answered, answered with denial of the boon she craved.

She recalled with intense vividness the change which had come in the expression of Lizette's face as she caught sight of her—Miss Markleham—on her knees behind Murdoch and moving with him. It must have been more than startling to the little one to see him there at all. It is not likely that it had occurred to her that he would find whence she had flown in her distress of soul, and that an answer to her prayer should come in the form of his actual presence there probably had not been among her most extravagant speculations. The sight of him when she was in that state of mental exaltation, which her face plainly showed had hold of her at the moment of the meeting, must have been a great and joyful shock. She must have thought it quite as much a miracle as any cure could be.

And then to see behind him, there at Lourdes, where she had gone to ask the Virgin for a sign, the very one, the only one who in her mind might have a better claim on him than she, must have been not other than uncanny. That the small one might easily take this for an answer from the Virgin, Miss Markleham quickly realized. She had prayed for Murdoch, had that little one, and in answer to her prayer the Virgin brought him to her, but in bringing him she also brought the very one, who, unwittingly, had come between them. Would not the little one believe all this to be a special manifestation?

In her room at the stuffy little hotel, Miss Markleham wrote a note to Murdoch. She told him that she feared her presence had made Lizette run away from him and outlined delicately her theory of the other's feelings. She told him that she should leave Lourdes the next morning and told him that she hoped he would not come to see her before she went. It was a very serious note, and in it Miss Markleham told him what she thought was true, that while she had in her mind no wish but to serve him, Fate seemed to have designed another part for her so long as she should be where he was. So she should go away. Her aunt opposed her going, but she should insist. She had not helped him in his search, although her efforts had been real and honest. She should not again allow herself to be so placed that she could be a hindrance to him.

It was after she had sent this note that she had a bad half-hour there with herself alone. During that half-hour she was honest with herself. There was, she knew, a hidden ring of self-forgetting sacrifice in what the note said, which was not true in fact. She realized that she was imitating, poorly, the real abnegation of the other woman. She knew that she was not going away as Lizette had gone away, with nothing but pure love of Murdoch, unselfish love, unselfish to the point of soul-suicide, as the reason for her going. She knew that she was not sublimely putting him away from her to save his happiness, as Lizette honestly believed that she was. She knew that deep in her heart the hope had not left her when she wrote that note, that somewhere, somehow, sometime, John Murdoch

would love her and marry her, even if the doing of it robbed him of a greater and a worthier love than she could ever show him. She felt that her impulse of self-sacrifice was tardy, that it came after the other had made agonizing renunciation. She knew she was withdrawing from the field only after Fate had vanquished and driven off her opponent. Yet she tried to get a sort of satisfying self-commendation out of it. Murdoch might find Lizette in Lourdes, but Miss Markleham quickly acknowledged to herself that the likelihood of it was not great after what had happened.

Murdoch saw the aunt again before they went away. She did not understand. The niece, evidently, had told her nothing, and she was much annoyed because the girl's desire to leave was so persistent.

They stayed another day, during which Miss Markleham did not stir from her hotel, and then they left. Murdoch was not told what train they were to leave on, and so could not see them off. He did not even think of this. His worry over this new development which had come in his searching for Lizette and certain cables which had come to him from New York occupied his thoughts.

As best he could he made arrangements to prolong his absence from the bank, and continued doggedly his search at Lourdes, although he felt reasonably certain that Lizette had left the city of the Holy Shrine.

It was not until he was preparing to leave Lourdes and was actually about to take his disappointed way to the railway station, disheartened and discouraged, that the portier of the hotel handed him a note. He smiled good-naturedly as he gave it to him, as one might smile who gives a stick of candy to a child.

"A lady gave me this to give to you when you should go away," said the impressive servant. "I was not to give it to you until just before you went. That was a consideration most impressed upon me. She said it was to come to you as a surprise. I promised, and you see that I have kept my word."

The note was from Lizette. It said good-by. It said that she had come to Lourdes to pray and that her prayers

had been answered by the Blessed Virgin. She would not bring the ruin on him. He was ever to remember that she loved him well. He was always to think of her as smiling, recalling, as she should herself, the happy days that lay buried in the past. He was to search for her no more. She should live and ever love him. Before the note could reach him she should be far away, knowing in her heart that what she did was best for him. She had so longed to once more nestle in his arms! She had so longed to take the happiness held out to her in that letter, sweet and wondrous, in which he asked of her to be his wife! But alas! This could not be. She had asked the Blessed Virgin, who had answered by a sign that the place she longed and hungered for was not hers to take. She could not take to him the ruin. By disappearing from his life she would give to him the freedom which would mean success and happiness in his new home across the sea. She pressed him to her heart. She said adieu!

Of course, his eyes were tear-filled when he had read this letter. Of course, his face showed that it had distressed him greatly. The portier was much discomfited.

"I regret, M'sieu," he said, "that I should be the bearer of ill news."

He paused a moment, thinking if he should tell about another errand given to him by this same lady who had given the note to Murdoch. He decided that there was already enough unhappiness about the matter to put his fee in danger, and did not tell Murdoch that he had also handed a note to Mary Markleham as she was leaving on the train.

CHAPTER XXVII.

KENTUCKY'S GREAT DISCOVERY.

The letter changed their plans. It shocked both Murdoch and Kentucky: There was an ominous finality about the poor little one's farewell. At first it had seemed impossible that she could evade them long, but now they had lost confidence in their ability to find her. They had been within a few feet of her and had missed her, although they had made every effort that they could to guard against such chance. They saw that if she chose to keep away from them it might be easier for her to carry out her determination of self-sacrifice than they had thought it could be by any possibility.

There came to Murdoch an inkling of the thought which to Mary Markleham would have been a distressing certainty, even if she had not received that note which the portier had given to her. He had a dim idea of the reason for Lizette's flight, but the evidence which was in his mind to support his theory was so indefinite that he could feel no kind of certainty about its value.

Murdoch telegraphed the facts to Houlier, and told him to keep watch of Paris without regard to cost. There was a new worry in his mind about Lizette's finances. She could have very little money left, even if she had been ever so saving in her expenditures. There was no way in which he could give her money, and he feared that she might suffer from the need of it. In that matter, as in others, he was quite helpless, but it added to the fever of his anxiety to find her.

He discussed the matter with Kentucky, and it was decided that Kentucky should remain in the south and keep close watch of the search there, while Murdoch went up

to Paris to see if anything could be done there which Houlier was not already doing. There was another reason why it was better for Murdoch's peace of mind to be in Paris. There were cablegrams from home that worried him, and he could manage home affairs better from Paris, where he would be in direct touch by cable with the bank in New York City, than he could from a remote country district like that down there in the foot-hills of the Pyrenees.

So Murdoch took the northern train. In a few days the pilgrimage was over, and Lourdes was emptied of its crowds of devotees. It was easy then to arrange with the local police there to watch the grotto, where stray visitors pray the whole year 'round, with some certainty that they would be able to do it thoroughly, and Kentucky went to Pau. There were two reasons for his selection of that city. In the first place, it was the largest in that part of France. In the second place, it was very near to where, in days gone by, Kentucky had painted the picture of that churchyard, where, afterwards, his loved ones were laid to rest in that dreadful cholera grave. Kentucky had a longing to once more see this place. It was probably intensified by his grief about the disappearance of Lizette, for new sorrows bring back memories of old ones oftentimes.

He only paused at Pau a night, and put the police there at work. Already all that part of France was being searched closely for the little one; but, when he could, Kentucky always supplemented the general instructions sent out from Paris by others mouth-given. Then, by diligence, he went a few miles farther to that tiny village slumbering in the ardent southern sunshine—ardent, but crisp, invigorating, with all enervating qualities filtered from it by the high peaks of the Pyrenees.

The place had changed but little since he had painted there that one picture which had been good enough to sell, but all too dear to part with. The small church had crumbled but a trifle. The sentinel poplars kept their never-failing watch as in the days gone by. He reached there just at sunset, and it came and went that night as other bright displays of gorgeous color had come and gone there

in the sky when he was happy, and had held there in his arms his little one, while his wife looked on at them and laughed, and the old woman who cooked their meals scolded across the churchyard hedge because they waited there to watch instead of going in to eat the dinners which were hot and waiting.

It had been years since he had seen the place, and now, with sorrow softened by their passage, it did him good to be there. It helped him in this new worry which had come to him, this sorrow about Lizette and Murdoch. Even the common grave, in which were buried all the victims of the cholera, that grave whose rough sides of new-turned earth had lingered like a wound in his sad memory, had changed in the flying of the years and become less horrible in its looks, if not in its significance. The unsightly heap of yellow clay had been shaped up and sodded, and over it the town had placed a simple monument. There were no names cut upon the stone. It is doubtful if, in those days of epidemic, records had been kept of who lay buried there, but on the stone was cut a brief inscription, which said that 'neath it lay a hundred victims of the scourge.

Kentucky thought that this was well. He reflected that it would have been new sorrow to him to have found her name among so many others on the monument.

The grave was tended with mechanical neatness, as all public property is like to be in any part of France, but there was no sign about it that anyone survived who had especial care for any of the dead who lay there. On the other graves throughout the churchyard there were little withered posies, sometimes a wreath of stiff, tin flowers; occasionally more elaborate decoration even on the graves of those whose deaths had come long years before, but on this common grave there were no signs that anyone except the vague, impersonal government remembered. Kentucky thought that on the morrow he would get some flowers to lay upon it. He was too weary now to make the effort.

As he rose from the seat upon which he had sunk, as he thought of the pleasant days gone by, he felt strangely

weak, and when he got back to the small hotel the weakness grew until he had scarcely strength to get upstairs alone and tumble into bed, a fever burning in his blood.

Perhaps it was because he had lingered in the night air too much at Lourdes. Perhaps it was the reasonable reaction from the strain there. Perhaps it was only the penalty which might properly be expected for his years of too much absinthe. But, at any rate, he was definitely ill, although the village surgeon told him there was nothing serious about it, that a few days' rest and dosing would set him right again. He telegraphed to Murdoch that he was ill, but that there was no occasion for worry.

For two days he lay there in the small hotel, not suffering, but very weak. From his window he could gaze out at the street, and even get a small glimpse of the church-yard and its grave beyond.

The first morning he got up he received a letter and a telegram from Murdoch. The letter told him that, with Houlier's help, a great search had been started for the little one, and that the authorities, especially in the south of France, had been furnished with many copies of Murdoch's sketches of Lizette. She had never posed before a camera. Photographs were much less common then than now. But the sketches were most careful likenesses and might well serve in identification. Houlier had much hope, and Murdoch told Kentucky not to feel discouraged. He said that he must make an effort to get wholly well again, and must take sufficient rest to help him. The time was coming fast, he said, when he, Murdoch, must of necessity go back to New York, for a time, at least. Affairs there were calling with a clamor that could not be denied. The telegram set the date for his departure. It said that he should sail two weeks from then.

This news came to Kentucky in the small dining-room of the hotel, and the rage it threw him into may have helped to make him strong. He was not really surprised that Murdoch should find it necessary to go back. He had expected it. But it seemed to do him good to swear and rage a little, and so he swore and raged.

Perhaps because he let his pent-up feelings loose in

anger against Murdoch and that bank which claimed Murdoch's time, he felt much stronger after he had eaten, and went into the village to get some flowers to place upon that grave. There was no florist's shop in so small a town, but in a dooryard he saw some roses blossoming, and he bought them, to the good wife's surprise. He went slowly to the churchyard.

He entered by the path, long since almost disused, which had been the main means of entrance when he had painted there in the days gone by, and again there came to him a rush of sweet, sad memories of the past. He paused at every step to gaze again at that pleasant prospect which he had known so well in days gone by. The tears came to his eyes, not bitter tears, but tears of softened grief, and, with head down-bent and eyes which slurred the present in looking dreamily into the past, he approached the grave again.

He saw again, as he approached, the wife who lay there. He looked at her as she had been long, long ago, and wondered if the tales of Heaven were true. He could plainly understand their origin in human need for comfort, even if, like the mirage of water which the thirsty desert traveler sometimes sees, they were built only of such stuff as dreams are made of. He felt the need, that morning, of such belief himself. It would comfort him, he thought, to think that she could look down on him and see him there, grief-struck and saddened by her loss even after the passage of so many years.

He wondered if, in gazing at him, she would pass his many errors by and understand. He wondered if there had been comfort for her when she saw his great devotion to the picture which hung there in his studio and told the little tale of this same churchyard. He wondered if she would count his faithfulness to her, a blessed memory, sufficient offset to his sins of absinthe, and if, as she looked down on him, she forgave him for his failures. He wondered if she could see how weak his step was, if she would note the trembling of the hand that held the flowers, if she would see the dullness of the eye which once had flashed so bright with the light of love for her, if she would

see the gray strands in the hair which had been so black and stubborn in the days gone by when she had rumpled it with loving fingers.

His eyes so filled with tears at thinking of these things that he could scarcely see the grave he kneeled beside as he stretched his hand out to lay the flowers upon it. He placed them gently on the turf and knelt there a long time beside the grave, unseeing and thinking only of the past until his eyes had cleared of dimming tears.

And then he saw that he had laid his flowers beside another little nosegay!

At first this hurt him just a little. It brought to mind the fact that, however, he might kneel and weep beside this grave, it was a common grave where other sorrows than his own lay buried. The luxury of exclusiveness was even denied to him in this, his woe.

Still the flowers were a tribute from some loving heart whose love had lived as long ago as his and was sacred to it. He looked at them with sympathetic curiosity. They were red carnations, bound with narrow, purple ribbon. A little card was tied to them, with the writing on it up-permost. He read with startled eyes:

"Pour l'amour de cher Kentucky."

"For the love of dear Kentucky!"

He could scarcely trust his eyes. It was Lizette's handwriting on the card. It was Lizette's sweet thought to come here and place the posies on the grave, as she had placed those other flowers above his picture in his little room.

For a second the true significance of their presence there did not strike him. He picked them up and kissed them, and, as he held them to his lips, it rushed upon him that they meant that she had been there and that his search was ended. These were a trace of her so recent that they could not fail to find her now. His very pilgrimage to the grave of those he loved who had died had led him to the finding of her he loved who lived! He must find out about them.

In hurrying from the churchyard he forgot his weakness, or it had gone from him.

It was not difficult to learn about her visit. Small towns have few things to talk about, and there had been that about the visitor's stay which had started many tongues a-wagging.

The landlord of the hotel explained that the lady who had visited the churchyard had been there during the afternoon of yesterday. Had they known that M'sieu would have been interested in knowing of her visit they would have gone to his room and told him of it. But who could dream that such a thing was true? That the two strangers who should chance to visit their small town, where so few strangers ever came, should know each other, though neither knew about the other's presence there! It was amazing! Her visit to the churchyard? The caretaker would know of that. It seemed that she did not know, at first, that the churchyard was familiar to her, and she had thought she needed help to find the cholera grave. They would send for the old man. He would tell M'sieu about it exactly as it happened. This was done.

He was old and garrulous. When he finally started on his story of the small one's visit, he first gave details of his own emotions. When they had sent for him from the hotel he had been much surprised. He had cared for the churchyard many years, but had not once been called upon to show it to a stranger. It was so small a churchyard, in so small a town!

He had told the lady that, he said, and she had smiled. She said that she had seen the churchyard from the hotel window, and that, of course, she knew the way to it, but that there was one especial grave she did not know and hoped that he would be kind enough to point it out to her. He asked what grave it was she wanted him to point out, and she said it was the one where lay the victims of the cholera. Also she said that she was glad to have for guide one who had lived there in the village many years, for perhaps he might have known the people who lay buried there and could talk to her of them. He told her that the cholera grave could not be missed and that he could readily talk to her of those who lay there. His memory was better for the faces that he knew long, long ago than

it was for many things more recent. Such, he had told her, was the way with age. He also assured M'sieu that such was the way with age. He would learn it for himself when he should become old.

He asked her who it was among the victims that she was interested in, and she told him that the wife and baby of a friend of hers in Paris slumbered there in their last sleep.

He took her toward the grave and was about to point it out to her, when she said herself that there it was and hastened to its side.

She was most pleased by the attention that had been given to the grave, and said that she would tell her friend of that when next she saw him. It was right there, said the caretaker, that a strange thing happened. The lady, who had been most interested and eager during all their previous talk, now broke into furious weeping. He asked her what it was that troubled her. He felt that it could not be the seeing of the grave, for that had come upon her without affecting her, and, besides, she had said that she had never known the two relatives of her friend who were there buried, so her interest in them could have only been for the sake of the friend and not because of personal grief. But when she said that she should tell her friend about it when she saw him, she broke down and cried most bitterly. In answer to his questions, at first she only moaned inarticulately, but when she said she grieved because her saying what she had about her friend had recalled to her mind the bitter fact that maybe she would never see him more. It had all been very strange, the caretaker asserted, and he had not understood the manner of the small lady.

She had asked him if he had lived there when he was a boy, or, rather, when he was a younger man, and he had told her that he had lived there all his life except for a few years. He had told her that he had left there just before the cholera broke out, which had been a lucky thing for him, and so had missed the scourge, but had returned not long afterward and had been there ever since. She asked him if he remembered an artist who once had

painted in the churchyard, and he had laughed at her and said he did remember him right well, because the artist and his wife and little child had lodged above his father's shop and had made his mother's temper bad by their irregularity at meals.

The old man laughed at this old memory. Kentucky remembered those days well, and what had been the woman's special aggravation. Each night he stayed there in the churchyard until after the sunset's tints had faded, for he tried to catch them there on his canvas. This had made his dinners late, much to the old woman's annoyance. He smiled even now, as he remembered how she had scolded across the hedge at him. Her tongue had been so sharp that she had sometimes frightened the young wife, who then was with him, and once or twice she had even made the dear small one cry with terror. He remembered how he had resented that, and how sharply he had told her that such goings on must stop if she wished to keep her lodgers.

The caretaker went on to tell about Lizette.

"She said she wished to enter the old church, and I went home to get the keys, leaving her still standing by the grave. She did not stay there, though, for before I reached the hedge she was there with me again. She went with me to my very door, and waited down below while I went up.

"When I came down with the keys she walked with me to the church, ever looking all around, as if she might be trying to remember some familiar thing which would not come readily to her mind. The whole small village seemed to be of interest to her, and she talked of it and asked me many questions. She said it seemed to her as if she had seen something very like it all before, almost as if the town had come to her, sometime, in a dream. She said her friend, an artist, had painted a picture of the churchyard which she had seen, and that, of course, accounted for her memory of that. She said it must have changed but little since the days when he had painted it."

"Very little," said Kentucky.

The old man looked keenly at him before he went on.

"So she said," he finally continued. "But she said that there seemed to be there in her memory a picture of things about the town which were not painted in the picture which her friend had made. The very butcher shop, she said, seemed like one that she had seen in dreams, grown older. She could not understand at all, she said, the strange feeling that all about the village was familiar to her—was familiar, although she never had set her eyes on it before.

"We went from my shop to the church and entered, and she looked about at the interior. It has been newly decorated, M'sieu, and is very fine now, I assure you. Before you go away you must certainly look in on it. She, however, did not seem to be impressed by it, although I told her what large sums the beautification of it had cost the parish.

"From the church we went back to the grave there in the churchyard, and it was then she placed the flowers on it. She had had them in her hand before. When she had put them there she kneeled and said a prayer.

"We left the churchyard just as the sun was setting, and she stopped and gazed at it until all the glory faded from the sky. While she looked at it a strange change came into her face, which almost frightened me. We were standing at the end of the old path, just beyond the hedge. It was where my mother used to stand and scold M'sieu because he kept the dinner waiting with his gazing at the sunsets.

"'It is strange,' she said. 'It is very strange. It is the churchyard of the picture—that I know. This is the churchyard that he told me of, and yet it is the churchyard of the memories, too! It is the churchyard of the picture. It is the churchyard of the memories!'

"I asked her what memories she meant, but she did not answer me. We started to go across the road there to my shop, where I intended to put by my keys before I went back to the hotel. She stopped there in the middle of the road.

"'You go on,' she said to me. 'After you have left the keys, come back. I wish to make arrangements about

having other flowers placed on the grave. I shall be waiting at the entrance of the path.'

"I did just as she told me, M'sieu, and when I came back, having left the keys, she was still standing in the entrance of the old path, which used to be the main way into the cemetery. She asked me again if I could remember the artist who had painted pictures there, and I told her all that I could remember of him.

"It is because his wife and baby are buried in the cholera grave that I wish to have the flowers put upon it,' she said.

"I tried to correct her mistake. I said, 'His wife is buried in the cholera grave. That I know. But his baby is not buried there. The baby did not die when the mother died. The baby was taken away from here. It did not die.'

"You were wrong," interrupted Kentucky, sadly.

"I was not wrong," the old man protested. "I ought to know, for I came back here and heard about it, not long after the little one had been taken away. The baby did not die, M'sieu. The baby was taken by its mother's relatives."

For a moment Kentucky looked at the old man with a strange eagerness of expression on his face. It was as if a great hope was being born within him. But he killed it at its birth.

"You are mistaken," he said, slowly. "I had thought you would remember me. I have waited all the afternoon for you to recognize me. I am the artist who painted in the churchyard—and the baby died. When I came back from America they both were dead—the mother and the little one. They both were dead—and buried in the cholera grave. It is because of that that I am here."

The old caretaker could scarcely believe his ears.

"Oh, la, la, la!" he cried. "Of a certainty it is you. I remember. I recognize you now. All the afternoon my mind has struggled to make out who you were. All the afternoon! It seemed to me that there was something about you somewhere, I could not tell what, which was familiar. Now I have it. And so you are the artist with

whom my mother used to quarrel. *Bien, bien, bien!* And it was because of you that the little lady left the flowers there and will arrange to have more sent from Pau. Ah, it is a pity that she did not know that you were ill at the hotel! How strange is life!"

He reached his hand out to Kentucky, and the old artist shook it heartily.

"I wondered if you would recall me," he said, smiling. "I should soon have told you who I was."

"Ah!" said the caretaker, "you wished to have a joke on me. And all the time you knew who I was, and all the time I had no thought that you were he at whom my mother used to scold because the dinners waited. *Bien! Bien!*"

"And so," said Kentucky, "you see that the little one was right. She knew the baby died because I told her of it."

The caretaker looked at him attentively for a moment. He was very solemn as he spoke.

"M'sieu," he said, "I am an old man now, and my memory is bad. But there are some things which are much impressed on me, and this is one. Perhaps it seems absurd for me to say that your own child did not die to you who says she did, but I am *sure*. When I came home from sailoring the cholera had passed, and you had come and found your wife was dead and gone again. But when I came my mother told me that the baby had not died. She told me more, but I cannot clearly recall all she said. It has been many years. But she told me that the baby did not die. She said that relatives of the mother came from Paris and took away the baby. I cannot be mistaken. She told me that the father of your wife and his sister or her sister—it must have been her sister, for I recall my mother spoke of her as a young woman—came and took the child away and paid the money that was owing."

Kentucky gazed at him with great intentness and gulped once or twice. The man's words impressed him greatly, but he fought to keep his mind from accepting the hope that was born within it. The whole thing was too impossible, too incredible to think of.

"When I returned from America," he said, slowly, to the man, "I came here quickly. I had not known about the cholera here until after I had been a day upon the road from Marseilles, where I landed from the ship. It was then that I learned about it and hurried here by night and day over roads that were very bad. I was poor, and that journey by special *voitures* cost me much. But still I made it when I heard that the cholera had swept this little town. I came here and I found that both my wife and baby had been laid to rest there in that common grave with all the other victims of the cholera."

The caretaker shook his head.

"Many years have passed," said he. "It is true that you ought to remember more about such things than I. It seems to me that some affair most strange is hidden in this matter. I will tell you how the tale was told to me on my return, which was not many weeks after you had come and gone.

"It was the first that I had heard about the plague here. Our own household was grief-stricken. Still there was room left in the mouths of folk for gossip. Tears in the eyes and sorrow in the hearts will not drive gossip from the mouth. Oh, I remember it so well. I wish that I could tell what was last week as well as I can tell what was twenty years ago! But that is the way with age—to have better memory for times remote than for times just passed.

"Well, when I returned there was much gossip in the village about your wife and you and the child. The story was that you and she had married against the wishes of her family. It was even said that you had been forced to go to England to get married, and that you could never have been wed in France, because her family had found for her another man."

"All that was true," said Kentucky, slowly, with a strange look growing on his face.

"Well, when you had been gone a time and did not come back as you had promised—pardon, M'sieu, I am merely telling you the things that were said here; I know nothing of them myself——"

"Go on," said Kentucky, calmly. "I know that unkind

things might well be said. I was delayed in America much longer than I had thought to be."

"So I was told," said the old caretaker; "so you see that my memory cannot be so very bad, if I remember that so accurately.

"Well, I was told that you did not come and did not come, and that the people who had given lodging to your wife were worried for their money. You remember, do you not, that you did not pay our family for the bill that you had left behind when you went off to the United States, and that you did not send money to your wife. Pardon, M'sieu! Such, I assure you, was the gossip. It was doubtless false, but such things were said. I beg your pardon."

"Go on," said Kentucky, reddening. "It was true. I did not pay because I could not pay. When I came back I paid. It was to get money that I went away."

"I remember that also," said the caretaker. "I remember that they told me that you paid when you came back, and that was what made them doubly frightened about the thing which had happened in your absence."

"What was the thing that had happened in my absence?" asked Kentucky, anxiously.

"Well, first of all, your wife's death," said the caretaker. "And, second, that which happened to the baby. It was because of that, I think, that they must have lied to you."

Kentucky, pale and trembling, stood and listened to him with half-opened lips.

"What happened to my baby?" he demanded.

"She did not die," the caretaker said, slowly, with his old lips twitching nervously and his old tongue moistening them now and then, as if he were distressed. "I know—I well remember—now—that they told you that she did. They said to me that when you came and found your wife was dead you acted like a madman."

"And well I might," said poor Kentucky.

"I remember her," the caretaker said, slowly. "And she was very beautiful."

Kentucky looked at him with grateful eyes. His heart thanked the old man for what he said. His talk had

shocked Kentucky much at first, and with so great a bound had the emotions in his heart surged high with hope that the blood, which had so deeply flushed his face as he had listened, left it even whiter than it had been when it went out again.

The old man spoke now with some determination, as if there had come in his mind a strong resolve.

"As I think about the matter," he said, slowly, "it seems to me that you have suffered great and grievous wrong. I thought so at the time. I think so now."

There was such conviction and real sincerity in his voice that again that surge of color came into Kentucky's face; again he looked at the old caretaker with eagerness.

"It seems to me that you have suffered grievous wrong," the man repeated, slowly. "The baby did not die. She did not even have the cholera. Such things are strange, but cholera is strange. You cannot blame my family too much. You must remember that they were very poor. You must remember that you owed them much. You must remember that you had been long away. You must remember that artists are often strange, and that it was not queer that they should think that when you did not come and did not come, the gossip spread that you had left your p'tite French wife and gone away to the United States to come no more. Well, this is how it happened. She died. Before she died she sent to Paris to tell her family, from whom she was estranged, if I remember, because she married you——"

"Yes, that is true," said poor Kentucky, trembling.
"Go on."

"The baby did not die," the old man said again, with absolute conviction.

Kentucky, overcome by this reiteration, felt strangely weak. His head swam round. He trembled. The caretaker was frightened.

"Come with me," he said. He led him to a seat there in the cemetery, where they both could plainly see the cholera grave.

Kentucky spoke with thickened tongue and crackling lips.

"For God's sake, tell me quickly," he said, with trembling jaws that almost made him stutter.

"This was the way it was," the old man said, with some excitement. "This, indeed, was just the way it was. You did not come. You owed much money. The people here had made their minds up to the idea that you had run away from both your debts and your wife. She died. Before she died she was much worried by the fact that you did not come to her or write to her. Or, if you wrote, there was something in your letters that made her most unhappy."

"I told her of my troubles in America," said poor Kentucky.

"Well, what it was that made her worry I do not know. Nobody knew. They thought it was as I have said, and that she feared as did the folk you owed that you had gone to stay and would not come to pay your debts or get your wife. When the cholera came and she was ill of it she was worse worried than before, and it may be that the worry of your silence made her worse."

"Good God, man!" said Kentucky, cowering. An American or Englishman could not so calmly have gone on, as did the old caretaker. The French are cruel. As a race, the suffering of others interests them, but does not make them sympathetic. There was in the old Frenchman now that same calm curiosity which a surgeon shows in watching the effect of pain upon a patient on the operating table.

"Before she died she sent to Paris," said the caretaker, deliberately. "I think the priest here told her that it would be to her soul's advantage if she sent to Paris. At any rate, she sent to Paris and two members of her family came down."

"Which ones?" Kentucky asked, his paleness giving way again to vivid coloring.

"That I cannot tell. They had come and gone before I came back here. I think it was her sister and her father. At any rate, no matter who they were, our people were most glad that they should come, for they paid the bills and took the child with them."

"Remember," said Kentucky, slowly. "Remember that if you are lying or mistaken your sin is horrible!"

The old man colored now with anger. He shrugged his shoulders.

"*Eh bien, M'sieu!*" he said. "If you do not wish to have me speak, why question me? I shall say no more. What reason would I have for lying? Not much, I tell you, for I will also tell you that when I learned what had been done, I told my people that they had done a sin, and that in time their suffering would pay for it."

Here he paused again. "It is strange about this matter of the sinning and the punishments," he said. "They were not punished for it on this earth, at least. It seems to me sometimes that those who sin the most the least are punished."

"I know," Kentucky interrupted, "but finish, please. We'll talk religion afterwards."

"I ought not to be offended," said the old man. "You have been ill, and what I have said to you has affected you. That I can plainly see. But, M'sieu, the baby did not die. Of that you may be sure. And that it is most easy for me to prove to you here in this town. I can take you to others who will tell you that the baby did not die."

Kentucky was trembling violently.

"Come, then," he said. "What you have said to me seems most incredible, but I must know. Come. Take me to whoever in your mind can straighten this thing out."

The old man led the way to a small shop, whose keeper was older than himself. There, and from others in the village, Kentucky learned that what the man had said had been quite true.

His baby had not died!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE STORY OF THE OLD WOMAN WHO SOLD COALS.

Poor Kentucky's emotions cannot be described. They vacillated between joy and fury. That his child had not been numbered with the victims of the cholera, that she might still be living, was such happiness to him that he could scarcely realize it. That he had been lied to and cheated of a father's rights in her was maddening. But there remained the possibility that he might find her yet, and this filled him with a strange exhilaration. He hurried to the postoffice and sent a message to John Murdoch, telling him about the matter, and then started to thoroughly investigate the case. With some difficulty he learned details, and got the only address those there in the town could give him. It was of the aunt of his dead wife, and he asked Murdoch in another telegram to have Houlier see her, if she could be found. He did not go to Paris for a full week, for even in the excitement of this new discovery he could not cease his searching for Lizette. It was hard to trace the little one in Pau, but finally he learned with reasonable certainty that she had gone the northward way, although he could not satisfy himself that her tickets had been taken all the way to Paris. When, a week later, he gave up his fruitless search, after having made such arrangements as were necessary to have it carried on by the authorities, he went finally to Paris. Murdoch met him at the train. There was, indeed, community of sorrow now between them. They both had suffered grievous losses.

So far as lay within his power, Murdoch helped Kentucky in his own sad search, even as the aged student had helped him in his searching for Lizette. The only clue

that poor Kentucky had were the old addresses of his loved one's family. These they vainly investigated. So far as they could learn they all were dead or gone away, where, no one seemed to know. It was when the old woman who sold coals came up with the week's supply, and just before the date when they had planned to leave for America, that matters began to clear again, and in their clearing became still more confused and painful. She lingered long to talk that afternoon, and wept. She seemed to share acutely in their own distress, and finally told them that there was a story which she ought to tell to them before they went away, a story which they certainly should know, but a story which was not entirely to her own credit. Still, she had resolved to tell it. Her distress was very keen. They could not doubt the truth of that. She sobbed and begged them to forgive her, before she told them why she sobbed or what there was to be forgiven.

"It is strange," she said brokenly. "It is all most strange. I cannot tell how God brings these things about. The ways of God are strange. I shall tell you something which will not help you now, and never will, indeed, but something which you ought to know because you love P'tite Madame so well.

"P'tite Madame," she went on, tearfully, "was very good to me. She did not know my real identity, or else she would not have been so good. I knew her. I know now who the dear child is. Ah! If only I knew where now to find her! I should beg forgiveness of her. I should beg forgiveness of her on my knees."

The men could not understand at all what worried the old woman, and watched her, wonderingly. But her sorrow was so real that Murdoch said kindly to her:

"I'm sure that you are greatly over-estimating some small thing."

"If that were true," she said, still weeping, "I should be happier. But it is not true. I tried, at first, to be as kind to her as possible, because I knew that she had suffered wrong."

"You certainly were kind to her," said Murdoch. "What wrong was it that she suffered? I am sure that you had

nothing to do with her flight from Paris. That your son had—that I also know, but what is passed is passed. I promised you that I should never harm him any more and I shall keep my promise. It would not bring my small one back to me to duck him in the Seine again."

"Ah!" said the old woman who sold coals, "if my own sins could be washed from me by ducking me in Seine water, I should beg of you to duck me there a thousand times, and not one word of complaint should come from my old lips. But ducking me in Seine water would not help my sin to her. I told you that I knew who she was. I do. She does not. It was because I thought that I had wronged her that I helped P'tite Madame once or twice, and it was because I helped her that afterwards she bought the coals of me and sometimes stopped to brightly chatter in my poor old shop. I helped her in the first place because I knew the wrongs she suffered under, although she did not, and wished to wipe away my part of them for my own soul's good. So when I could be kind to her, I was kind. I tried even to do more, but that was quite beyond my power. I tried to find her father for her, years after the whole thing had happened, but it was too late. He vanished from the south of France where I had last heard of him, and never could I find where he had gone. P'tite Madame—she was my niece!"

The two men looked at her in sheer amazement.

"This was the way it was. My sister married much against our parents' will. She married an American—an artist. I never saw him once. My parents never spoke of him except to curse him, and after my poor sister ran away with him her name was rarely mentioned in our home, or, if it were, was mentioned coupled with unpleasant words. I am not so old, Messieurs, as I am sure I look to be. Indeed, I am not quite so very old. I was the youngest of the family, and when my sister ran away it was that I was in the convent. She surely loved her artist husband. One time when she was lying ill she wrote to me a letter full of love for me and full of love for him. She said that all that had been said of him was false, and that there was in all the world no man so good, so kind, so tal-

ented as he. She wrote of him in such loving words and with such praise that after that I could not quite believe the hard things that my parents said of him and her. I was young, too, and romantic, as young women are. It may seem strange that an old woman who sells coals should have an education; but I had an education and read many books. I was very sorry for the way our parents thought of her and him, Messieurs. It was not a few times when I wished that I, too, might find an artist husband to bear me to the south of France."

Kentucky was looking at her with strained eyes. He seemed to find in her recital a promise of strange things to come.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Paillard," she said. "That is my name. I have not told that to a soul for many years. But Paillard is my name."

Kentucky's face was white as chalk. He tried to speak. He could only move his lips, which, dry almost to cracking, loosed no sound. His hands twitched nervously, their fingers opening and shutting with no object in their action. She looked at him with worry in her face. Murdoch had been watching her, but when she paused and began to stare so fearlessly at poor Kentucky, he looked toward him, too, and what he saw upon Kentucky's face alarmed him. He sprang up quickly and went to the student's side. He placed his hand upon his shoulder. He shook him. He spoke to him with terror in his voice.

"Kentucky!" he cried. "Kentucky! What's the matter with you? What's the matter—tell me what's the matter!"

But Kentucky did not speak. It was evident from the working of the muscles of his face that he was trying to do so, but no sound except some strange dry clickings came from him. He merely strained forward with that face on which his agony was written and looked into the face of the old woman who sold coals. She gazed at him transfixed between fear and wonder. Murdoch and she both thought the student had been taken by a fit. Murdoch bade the woman go for water, and placed his arm around

Kentucky's shoulders. The old woman got the water and Kentucky let Murdoch bathe his face with it. When finally he could speak he only said to her:

"Go on. Go on. Go on. Tell me about your sister. Tell me about your sister, who was Lizette's mother. Tell me about the artist she ran away with. Tell me everything. Tell me about the child."

"But M'sieu——" said the old woman, anxiously. "I shall run to get a doctor."

"No. No. Tell the story. Tell it quickly."

Still she hesitated. Murdoch kept his arm around Kentucky, and would have raised him to take him to a bed, but Kentucky would not move to rise or take his strangely staring eyes from off the woman's face.

"Go on. Go on," he said. "Did your sister die?"

"She died," said the old woman, wonderingly.

"Did she have a baby?" asked Kentucky.

"She had a baby," said the woman.

"Did she die of cholera?" asked Kentucky.

"She died of cholera," said the woman.

Now Murdoch began to understand. His face paled, too. He waited for Kentucky's coming question in an attitude almost as tense as that of the old student around whose stooping shoulders his strong arms were held.

"Did the baby die?" Kentucky asked with a twitching, nervous lips.

"The baby did not die," the woman said. "And that is where my sin lies. We paid the people with whom they had lodged to tell the father when he came that the child died with the mother. It was a lie. The mother died; the baby lived. The baby, Messieurs (and here the old woman swayed with hands clasped tight between her knees), the baby lived and was brought here to Paris by my sister. It was a quarrel that we had about this thing, that quarrel that made me do the thing that made my people tell me to go my way and come to them no more. I went it. It has not been a good way. The baby, Messieurs, the baby—was—P'tite Madame. The baby was Madame Lizette."

And now Kentucky closed his staring eyes, and, slipping

through Murdoch's arms, themselves relaxed by great surprise—slid gently to the floor.

And thus was the revelation of Lizette's origin made to the two men who loved her. Thus were many things revealed—Kentucky's strange love for her, which he had often said was like a father's love; Lizette's own love for him, which she had many times declared was not like that she bore for Murdoch; Lizette's strange and half-understood emotions when she looked upon that picture of the churchyard in Kentucky's attic-room; her puzzled feelings when she had been in that southern churchyard where the sentinel poplars stood, and where the great bearded artist had, in days gone by, clasped strong arms around her and held her up to watch the fading sunset.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DEFEAT.

The effect of this amazing revelation on Kentucky was astonishing. It seemed to give him strength. It seemed to take the years away from him even as the weary search had added many to his quota. The knowledge that his baby lived, and that that baby was the little one he loved so well and for whom he searched with Murdoch, gave incentive to his life—something it had ever lacked since he was told that the little one slumbered in her mother's arms there in the cholera grave in the south of France. If it were possible that the two men could be closer in their friendship than they were before, they became so after this revelation of their community of love. Paris has never seen, and is unlikely ever to see, such searching as was made of it by these two men. Every agency which they could bring to work with them was enlisted in their earnest search. Every stone was turned which human guesswork could imagine had underneath it some clue to this small woman who had disappeared.

For the first time in his life Murdoch broke down physically. Lack of sleep, worry and the tremendous physical strain of the search made him ill, and for three weeks he was in his bed—in the old studio. He would let no woman but the old woman who sold coals look after him. He did not find it in his heart to feel angry with her. She had deceived Lizette, but also she had cared for her when most she needed friends. Many details of the poor child's lonely life in Paris after she had fled from the lofts of the shops where artificial flowers are made, in which she had been placed by her mother's father—long dead now—she told

to Murdoch. Murdoch almost felt thankful, as she talked, that the old man was dead. He feared that had he lived he should have wreaked on him a vengeance for his treatment of his loved one. But he was dead, and all the family were dead save only the old woman who sold coals.

Finally three months had passed since the two men had looked up so eagerly at the windows of the studio which overlooked the Gardens of the Luxembourg, expectantly, and hoping to see in one of them her bright face, framed and wreathed in welcoming smiles. The police had given up. Newspaper advertising had done no good. Private detectives had scoured all France for her. Even poor Kentucky, who had sadly aged during the search, was convinced that further effort was well nigh useless.

The tragedy had brought these two old friends closer together than they had been before, and neither considered for a moment the idea of being parted. So, at last, tired and worn, heavy hearted and sorrowful, they set their faces toward America and journeyed to New York.

CHAPTER XXX.

JOHN MURDOCH, BANKER.

Once back again at the bank, Murdoch threw all that he could of his energy and life into the business which had robbed him of that which was dearer to him than all else put together. Early he worked and late he worked, and his fame as a banker spread abroad. He had never touched the canvases Lizette had bought for him with such merry jokings with the dealer, and arranged for him so prettily by the easel in the studio. He felt certain that never again could he use brush or palette. His life, had not Kentucky been with him, would have become a veritable desert of loneliness. The two old friends were ever in each other's company, and their friendship grew with the passing of years.

Years have their softening and their chastening influence. Five of them had passed before John Murdoch and Kentucky ceased to say in expectation, "When we find Lizette." But the years passed, and find her they could not. Each year they went to Paris, and each year they made new efforts. All the efforts failed. They permitted no change to be made in the old studio in Paris. Murdoch, *le millionnaire Americain*, and the romance of his quest for the little one he loved became a tradition in the Quarter. By and by the changing crowds forgot it and did not even look with curiosity at those windows which overlooked the Gardens of the Luxembourg. In New York, when the story became known, it was a nine days' wonder, but with the tenth day came forgetfulness, and the old routine at the bank began again, while the world forgot the fact that the staid and solemn banker had been a most romantic figure as a lover. But Murdoch did not

forget. Had not he had his old friend with him to talk of her John Murdoch might have been a misanthrope.

He permitted not one single change to be made in the studio which overlooked the Gardens of the Luxembourg. Everything was as it had been. The old woman who sold coals closed her shop and went to live there in the studio, to care for it and keep it ever bright and cheerful for the coming of its mistress—for they would not admit that that mistress might not come at all. Kentucky did not become less eccentric with the passing of the years. He paid his board to Murdoch regularly, and told him that if he should once refuse to take it he would take ship back to Paris. Murdoch knew he meant this and never made any question of it. It seemed somewhat absurd for him to come home in the evenings and find the aged student sitting in a lofty-ceilinged room in the old mansion there on Madison avenue poring over those little pictures on the wood, but each day he worked at them and regularly he shipped them to the dealers to be disposed of in Paris at the old rates.

"There is one thing about this all that mortifies me," he said one night to Murdoch.

"What is it?" asked John Murdoch, looking up from his newspaper. His eyes had a deeper, more steadfast expression now than in the old days in Paris. But they twinkled sometimes with the dry humor that had been characteristic of his father. They smiled now as he looked at Kentucky and asked the question.

"It's this," Kentucky said, with grumbling. "The dealers have the best of me. I hadn't thought of that before. By George! they have the best of me at last."

"How?"

"Why the paint is always dry now, before they pay me for my pictures," said Kentucky. "I can't work them with my wooden box at such great distance. I have to have them dry before they can be packed for such a voyage."

"You told me that they'd raised the price, though," said Murdoch, smiling.

"Oh, that's all over now. That was only for a little while. It only lasted while they could say that I was your

close friend and tell the tale of me that came out in the newspapers. It passed with the passing of our fame. I only get the same old five francs now."

He painted on in silence for a time, drawing some of those marvellously fine line which would have done credit to a carriage striper. It was most incongruous to see the aging student employed at this small work there in the luxurious surroundings of the Madison avenue house, but Murdoch never hinted to him that there was no need for him to work. He knew that those small pictures had much to do with keeping old Kentucky happy and contented.

"By the way," Kentucky said at last, as he held one off and squinted at it through his half-closed eyes exactly as he had in days gone by while he painted out his debt to Murdoch, and Lizette read the Testament to him.

"Well?" said Murdoch, interrogatively.

"Are you going to be at the bank tomorrow?"

"Certainly. Am I ever anywhere else? What's the matter with you to-night, Kentucky?"

"Nothing. Going to be there at half past ten?"

"Certainly, I'll be there at half past ten.. Where in the world else would I be at half past ten?"

"Don't know. Can't always tell. I'll drop in about then. S'pose I'll have to give my name to that damned boy!"

"No," said Murdoch. "Just wear your hat. They all know it. I think that most of them are somewhat afraid of it."

Kentucky became reflective.

"It's a pity about that hat, Murdoch," said Kentucky. "I'm really afraid it's wearing out."

"Not really," said Murdoch.

"I really fear," went on Kentucky, gravely, "that, with other old friends of my childhood, it is beginning to show age."

"Why don't you get a new one, really, Kentucky," said Murdoch, to whom that hat had long been sorely grievous.

"I got one once, not long ago," Kentucky said, "and was going to wear it to the bank. I knew the old one bothered you. I tried to wear the new one, but I couldn't.

The wheels here in my head stopped turning when I put new covering above them, and I gave the new hat to a beggar. Is it understood, then, that at half past ten to-morrow you have an engagement at the bank with me—and with my hat?"

"It is understood," said Murdoch.

"All right, then. Get up, you slothful creature, and come over here and look. My brush slipped while I painted in the mouth of this old pirate and it makes him look like your cashier. Come and look at it."

Murdoch rose and looked. It did look much like Jeremiah Smith. He laughed.

"If you'll sell it to me," said Murdoch, "I'll give it to him."

"I will give it to you at the regular price—five francs."

Murdoch took a dollar from his pocket, and, as Kentucky had put the finishing touches on the picture, took that also, and examined it.

"I think your work gets worse with the passage of years, Kentucky."

"I know it," said Kentucky, with conviction, "and it fills my soul with joy. You understand that that is the accomplishment of the impossible. Not many men when dying can look back at the past and say that they have done that thing which no man else has ever done, but I can. I can say with truth that I have painted pictures which were worse than it was possible for human hands to paint. I know it and I glory in it. Now I'm going to quit."

"Quit what?"

"Quit working for to-night. I've painted out my last week's board bill. It would never do for me to get too far ahead. It wouldn't seem like me."

"That's right, it wouldn't. Let's talk Quarter," said John Murdoch.

They often "talked Quarter." It is doubtful if they found in any part of their lives together such enjoyment as when they were talking of Lizette, or of the details of that life in Paris which seemed so far away in banking hours, but came so close when banking hours were over,

and they sat there in that solemn brownstone mansion, going over the past. More than once, when they had finished, Murdoch almost had to rub his eyes to make certain that New York was not the dream and Paris the reality. Even now that he had become a staid and solemn banker, and had stopped winning prizes of honor and had turned attention to what in the United States is considered the much more genteel business of winning dollars, the old life there in the studio which overlooked the Gardens of the Luxembourg was real to him in every detail when he talked of it with old Kentucky.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A BUSINESS TRANSACTION.

It was not long after ten the next morning when Kentucky made his appearance at the bank. His quaint figure was no longer the object of such consternation as it had been that first time that he had ever entered those dignified portals, when he had come to New York to get Murdoch and take him back with him to Paris on that sadly futile quest for poor Lizette, but it was still a matter of much interest. No longer did the employees of that staid and respectable banking house look on him with horror, and consider his general appearance a public scandal, but there were those there who still believed that if the president of that bank was to associate with men who looked like that he should keep them caged. But this day Kentucky entered with a confident step.

"I have come," he said, with dignity, "on business."

"Great Scott!" said Murdoch, sitting straight up in his chair. "Sit down then, my dear sir," and laughed.

Kentucky was offended, and Murdoch saw that his offense was real. Strange traits Kentucky sometimes showed. Murdoch had long since learned to know that his old friend was a man of moods, and that these moods must be carefully respected.

Kentucky gravely took the visitors' chair.

"I have come," he said, with dignity, "to borrow money."

"All right, old man," said Murdoch, "how much money do you want?"

"The first thing you should ask," Kentucky said, aggrieved, "if you treated me as you would treat another man who came here on a similar errand, is what security I've

got. You've got no business to ask me first how much I want."

The ghost of a smile wavered across Murdoch's face, but he humored the old student.

"We don't ask that of a man whom we know will not ask more than he can give security for. We find out first how much he wants and try to see whether or not we've got that much to lend. Then we talk about security afterwards."

"Is that the way you do with other people?" asked Kentucky, with suspicion.

"Yes, that's the way," John Murdoch answered.

"All right," Kentucky said. "I want ten thousand dollars."

Murdoch tried not to gasp.

"You see, it's this way," said Kentucky. "I've got to have ten thousand dollars. I'm going into business."

"You're going into business!" said John Murdoch.

"Yes, you idiot," said Kentucky; "why shouldn't I?"

"It's no more business for you to call me an idiot, my dear sir, than it was for me to say to you what you just now took such exception to," said Murdoch.

"That's all right," said Kentucky, "but I'm no banker, and I don't pretend to be. As a banker, you must put up with the eccentricities of your customers or you'll lose your trade. Your customers don't have to forgive yours. All they have to do is go down the street and find another bank."

"Now, old man," said Murdoch, "don't do that. We can't afford to lose your business. This has been a long, hard winter."

At last Kentucky laughed.

"Shut up," he said. "Now tell me. Will you lend that money to me? I can give you security worth pretty nearly that right away, and, within a few weeks after you have loaned the money, I can give you more."

"Are you in earnest?" asked John Murdoch.

"Certainly, I am in earnest," said Kentucky.

"I'll do it, just for luck," said Murdoch. "What's your security?"

Kentucky most impressively pulled out a large and business-looking pocketbook, and took from it a solemn-looking paper. This he unfolded with much ceremony, smoothing out its creases as he opened it.

"You see," said he, "that I have here a deed for certain building lots in New Jersey."

Murdoch hid his surprise as best he could. He took the paper. One glance showed him that it was no deed, but a mere contract showing that Kentucky had paid two hundred dollars on some land which he could take a title to by paying two thousand dollars more, but he realized that it would startle the old student if he explained this to him, and he said that the papers seemed to be most satisfactory and that he could make the loan.

"How much of the money can you get for me to-day?" asked Kentucky.

"You should have notified me in advance if you had wanted such a sum," said Murdoch, gravely. "I will see what I can do."

He rose and left the room. When he came back he held in his hand ten thousand dollars. While he had been getting it of the cashier, he had vainly tried to puzzle out the reason for this most astonishing performance of Kentucky's. One thing he was quite certain of, and that was that Kentucky would not come to him with such a proposition unless he really believed that he would do quite as he said and pay the money back. Murdoch gave it to him, gravely, and told him that he must give him in return a promissory note. He handed him a blank, but Kentucky had to get his help in filling out the record of his obligation.

"There," Kentucky said, as he put the money in his pocket, "I've got more money in my clothes than they ever held before. Do I give you this deed of mine to my property, also, as security, or is the note enough?"

"You must deposit the deed with me," said Murdoch, "as security for the note."

"Is that the way you do with other people?" asked Kentucky.

"That is the way we do with everybody," said the

banker. "I shall do with you exactly as I do with other people who come here to the bank to transact business."

"All right," Kentucky said. "All right, then. Is there any written paper to go with this aside from the deed itself?"

"If you look the paper over, you will find on its back two blanks for transfer," said the banker. "One of those you must fill out. That assigns the property to me, in case you do not pay your obligation."

Kentucky read the blank most carefully.

"It looks to me," he said, "as if in signing that blank there I was giving you the property."

"You are doing exactly that—in case you do not pay," said Murdoch.

"Is that the regular thing?" Kentucky asked.

"That is the regular thing," the banker said.

"All right," said Kentucky, and signed the paper. "Good-by," he added. "I've got other business to attend to. I'll see you at the house to-night."

And he went out, carrying with him in his pocket more actual cash than he had ever seen before, and leaving in the bank a sadly puzzled banker.

CHAPTER XXXII.

KENTUCKY'S INVESTMENT.

When they reached their home that night the matter was not referred to in any way. Murdoch asked the butler when Kentucky had come in, and the butler said that the old student had preceded him by only a few moments. Kentucky was evidently weary, but he was also very evidently happy. That night he started in to tell a story of the Quarter. It was a funny story, but he went to sleep in telling it, and Murdoch aroused him only with a vigorous shaking.

"You were snoring like a beast," said Murdoch, as the old student shook the sleep out of his eyes.

"Was I?" asked Kentucky. "Well, I've got a right to be a beast. I own some land now. Capitalists can be beasts and no one dares to tell them so. You've got to treat me with more respect now that I'm a capitalist, John Murdoch."

It was about three weeks after that Kentucky, evidently filled with joy, unfolded some shiny, half-transparent papers before the astonished gaze of Murdoch.

"Now, you see, this is where we're going to live in the near future. This is what I got that money for. And when you come with me to live there, I'm going to charge you a thundering big board bill and make you pay your own loan back."

Murdoch looked at the papers, which were the plans for a studio on the Palisades, high up upon the Hudson's banks. The plan of the main floor was the same as that of the studio in Paris.

"I made up my mind," Kentucky said, "that living here in this old house was too respectable for both of us. Of

course, we can't go back to Paris. I wish we could, and so do you. But that is quite impossible. And so, you see, I've had the old place reproduced as far as that was possible there on the bluffs. We'll have the Hudson to look at instead of the Boulevard, in front, and, on the side, there'll be the swaying trees of some real woods instead of the pleasant greenery of the Gardens of the Luxembourg, but it'll do both of us good to get away from Madison avenue and into something like the old studio in Paris again.

"I tell you, Murdoch, we're getting commonplace and rotten. I knew it long ago, and tried to think about some way to stop it, but it took me a long time to figure out this way. I believe that it's a good way, Murdoch, and I hope that you will think so. I've planned it out for both of us. I've got things fixed for you so that it will be for you as it was in the old days, or just as much so as it can be, without her. I've got a little place for me that will be like, in all ways, except its dirt—I've lost the taste for dirt since I have lost the taste for absinthe—like my little room there underneath the roof. In other ways, you see, the building is about conventional. But it's away from New York City, and I'll be glad to rent you quarters in it, old man."

It was like the ingenuity of Kentucky to originate such a plan.

"This makes me think," said Murdoch, after he had looked the plans over carefully, "of the way you made a light for us the night we told you that we had no oil because we were afraid you would make us sit up late and I had to go so early to the school that I did not want to sit up late. We told you that we had no oil, you know."

"Murdoch, man, did you have oil that night, and was that all a put-up job?"

He paused a second and looked up as the Kentucky of the old days had looked up from under bushy eyebrows when he made a joke.

"I am getting rapidly to know you better, now," he added.

"And I am learning you," said Murdoch. "Not rapidly, but slowly learning you. You're too complex to do 'quick

study' on. But I am just beginning to get acquainted with your many varied phases."

"Did you really think I swallowed that great lie of yours that night, Murdoch?" said Kentucky, with reproach.

"Why, didn't you?" asked Murdoch, in surprise.

"Dear boy, I'm not congenitally idiotic. I gave you a proper punishment. That was all. If you had told the truth and said that you were tired and wanted to go to sleep, I should have let you go to sleep. I should certainly have let you go to sleep. It was only because I saw that you were clumsily trying to lie to me that I stayed and stayed and stayed. I feel that sometimes mere man must take the part of Providence, when Providence fails to punish quickly."

John Murdoch looked at him in simple wonder.

"Did you really notice all the oil there in those lamps?" he asked.

"I did, and when I saw it, and when I saw the enormity of the lying you had done, I made my mind up to the fact that you should suffer then and there for it. I was sorry for the little one. She had not lied. I don't think that she could have lied—unless," he added, later by a moment—"unless she lied for you. She could have even lied for you, John Murdoch."

"As Providence," said Murdoch, "you were merciless and sly. I never once suspected that the man who punished me really knew that he was doing so. I thought that we had made you suffer."

"So you had," Kentucky answered. "So you had. But don't you see, I suffered in a noble cause? I suffered in my efforts to make you see that lying does not pay? You suffered, on the contrary, in trying to get sleep through it. I'm glad I thought of that small business with the butter and the handkerchief. I racked my brains for something, and that was the first that came. It worked. I made you sit up till almost daylight. Then I went home to sleep, having painted my full week's quota of little pictures and given them to the dealer that very day. You see, Murdoch, that the transgressor's way is hard!"

"It is, indeed," said Murdoch.

Then he sat in thought.

"I wish Lizette were here to hear that," he said, frankly.

"It would make her laugh."

And both men sank to gloominess again.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HOPE REVIVED.

Before the new studio was ready for occupancy spring had come again and Kentucky left for his annual visit to Paris. Murdoch could not go that summer. There had been a panic and matters in the financial world were too unsettled to permit him to leave the bank for a single day. But he was glad to have Kentucky make the pilgrimage to the old studio in the Boul' Miche'. He made the old student promise to see that everything was kept ever ready for the small one.

They had almost given up their hopes by now, and no longer spoke of what they'd do when Lizette again should be with them. But it was a sort of solace to Murdoch's aching heart to feel that the search was still kept up, even though he did not expect it to lead to any definite result. For the same reason he kept the studio always as it had been when she went away.

Kentucky wrote to Murdoch often and reported that the old woman who sold coals was keeping the studio in excellent order and that the fire was always burning in the new stove.

"At this season the Gardens from the windows are most beautiful," he wrote. "The trees are green and swaying in them, and the birds are nesting there even as they used to do when wee Lizette looked down on them and loved them. I believe they must be lonely here without her. I've seen Houlier and he tells me there is nothing more to do. He will not say she may not have been in Paris. He says one cannot watch all Paris, but he swears that all that could be done has been done. I guess he's right. I'm certain that no criminal was ever half so clever in keeping off pursuers

as this small child, imbued with the notion of self-sacrifice, has been in eluding those who love her. I can't stand it here, old man. It breaks me up and wears me out. I'm going south to see my churchyard once again and then I'm going back to New York City first and the studio on the Jersey Palisades as soon afterward as it can be made fit to live in. I mean as soon as I can get my little traps into my own small room there under the sloping roof, so that I shall feel at home there. I shall leave in a couple of weeks at the most and will cable you when to expect me."

Murdoch laid this letter aside with a sigh. He had not hoped for anything definite, but still he sighed over the letter. The panic that had prevented him from going to Paris had become more serious. Business houses were falling on every side. Some of the bank's customers had gone under. It was a time of hard work and severe mental strain for bankers.

But all the hard work and all the worry could not drive away the dull, aching pain that was in John Murdoch's heart. They brought lines of care into his face and made him look more than ever as his father had looked in the days when John remembered him sitting in that same room, but they could not make him forget.

Murdoch was presiding at a meeting of the board of directors on the day before that which Kentucky had set as the date on which he would probably sail, when a cablegram was handed to him. He assumed that the message merely announced Kentucky's departure and he let it lie on the table until the directors had filed out of the room.

But when he had torn off the envelope and read its contents he suddenly sat erect in his chair and his face glowed with a look of hope quite different from the settled weariness that had rested there a moment before. The message was from Kentucky, and it read:

Have news of Lizette. Old woman received letter from her saying is ill and wants news of you. No address, but Houlier has taken up search. Will stay on in hope of finding her.

KENTUCKY.

The blood surged up to Murdoch's head so that the words on the cable form danced before his eyes. He had

told himself a thousand times, "There is no chance," but deep down in his heart there had remained the hope that some day he should find Lizette. This message from Kentucky, it was true, might lead to nothing. It might prove as baffling as a hundred clues that had been run to earth without result, but it fanned into fresh life the smouldering hope that was ever in Murdoch's heart.

Kentucky said nothing about his coming to Paris. But Murdoch felt that he could not wait in New York even though the cable could keep him informed of every step in the progress of the search, even though he knew that Kentucky would do all that could be done, even though the safety of the bank and his own fortune might be in the balance.

He could not well afford to leave the business at such a time. The panic had brought about the failure of some of the bank's customers and it had required all Murdoch's influence and all his ability to keep its resources intact. He had no fear of the ultimate result, for the bank was a strong institution, stronger even than in the days of John Murdoch, Sr. But there was no telling what might happen if he should leave his post.

Murdoch thought long and seriously of this matter. Then his thoughts drifted away to Paris, the old studio, Kentucky and Lizette. He saw her face again, not happy and smiling as he had last seen it, but pale and drawn with suffering. She was ill, Kentucky's message said. The blood rushed back to Murdoch's heart and he gripped the arms of his chair as he thought of Lizette, ill, without a friend near her, himself powerless to help her. He felt that he could not stay. He thought of the great happiness he had missed before by remaining at the bank when he would have gone to her. If this new-born hope was to be crushed as so many of his hopes had been before, he could endure it better there in Paris, where he could take an active part in the search. And if Lizette were to be found! But John Murdoch did not think beyond that possibility. There was no need that Kentucky should beg of him to come this time. He hastily sent a message telling Kentucky that he was coming; he telephoned to his house to

have his luggage made ready; he sent a message to engage passage by a steamer that was to sail the following day. Then he sent out to summon the directors and his lawyer.

The lawyer was a man who had attended to the interests of the Murdochs for more years than John had lived. He had loved John Murdoch's father; he loved John and he had a high opinion of his business ability. This opinion received a rude shock and neither he nor the directors could conceal their amazement when Murdoch told them that he must go to Paris and that he had decided to place at their disposal his entire private fortune to be used in maintaining the integrity of the bank if it should become necessary to do so.

The men sitting around the table in the back room of the banking house knew that that fortune ran into many figures and they gazed at him in silent astonishment as though he had suddenly taken leave of his senses. Murdoch did not explain his reasons for going to Paris further than to say that the matter which called him there meant more than all his fortune, that it might mean as much as life itself. They had heard his story and they understood something of the reason that was calling him away. At any rate his action in providing for the necessities of the bank had removed the possibility of objection on their part. A man who was so anxious to go to Paris that he was willing to sacrifice a million dollars in order to do so was not likely to be dissuaded by any argument that could be brought to bear upon him.

So it was that within twenty-four hours of the time when Kentucky's message had reached him Murdoch was on the deck of an ocean steamer sailing out of New York harbor, his heart a tumult of hope, but outwardly staid and dignified as he ever was. No one of his fellow passengers could have guessed the romantic nature of his errand or would have fancied that there was room beneath that sedate exterior for thoughts beyond those of business.

Murdoch sent word to Kentucky from Havre telling the hour when he would arrive, and when he alighted from the railway carriage in Paris the old student was waiting for him. Kentucky was all eagerness and excitement, but

the first look at his face told Murdoch that Lizette had not been found. He could not have mistaken that message had it been written there.

As they clattered through the streets on their way to the studio, Kentucky told Murdoch all that could be told of the news that had brought the banker from New York when nothing else on earth could have moved him from his post.

When he had returned from the south of France, Kentucky said, he had noticed that something agitated the old woman who sold coals. Her usual cheerfulness was lacking. She had appeared much troubled and distraught as she went about her duties in the studio, and when Kentucky referred to Lizette in giving directions for the care of the studio, at the time when he was preparing to depart, she had gone hastily out of the room with her apron to her eyes.

This action on the part of the old woman confirmed a suspicion which had been forming in Kentucky's mind. When he accused the old woman of having seen Lizette or knowing something of her whereabouts she had broken down and acknowledged that she had most alarming news of her.

She had received a letter from the little one—Kentucky told this part of the story with tender emotion that made it easier for Murdoch to bear, though it brought the tears to his eyes in a quick rush of emotion. Lizette had written that she was ill—at least she had not said that she was ill, but that she was "so vairy, vairy tired," she feared she had not much longer to live. She was going away, and she must hear once more of Pudgy—yes, and of dear, old Kentucky. The old woman must not let them know of this letter, but she must write and tell Lizette what she knew of Murdoch—if he was married—if he was well and happy in far distant America and if he had been recently to the old studio.

It was not a long letter, but the tone of sad weariness that pervaded it told even more than Lizette's confession that she was "so vairy, vairy tired." The old woman had answered the letter—had told her that Murdoch was in

America and that Kentucky was about to go there after a brief visit to the old studio. At the same time she begged Lizette to release her from her promise of secrecy and to write to Murdoch, who loved her and would always love her. She had told her that it was not right to remain in hiding from him and from Kentucky and begged her at least to come to the studio that she might see her once more.

All this the old woman said she had written to Lizette, but afterward she had been much worried by the matter, and even though it were a sin upon her soul—for Lizette had adjured her to say nothing of having seen her or heard from her—she would tell Kentucky all she knew. It was not right that the little one should hide herself away, alone and heart-sick, from those who loved her.

As soon as Kentucky had heard this he had sent his message to Murdoch and had communicated the news to Houlier, who had at once caused the city to be searched with all thoroughness, but without result. It was certain that Lizette had been in Paris; the postmark of the letter showed that it had been mailed in the city.

But it was not at all certain that she was there when the search was made. She had said that she was going away and very likely she had done so. The letter which the old woman had written she had been directed to send *poste restante*, so that it afforded no clue once it had been delivered. Kentucky himself had written a letter and Houlier had had the post-office watched, but no one had come to claim it. The outlook apparently was most discouraging.

Murdoch was greatly cast down by this report. The momentary gleam of hope caused by Lizette's letter had flickered and gone out, leaving them in darkness as before. The anguish of the two old friends was great. Added to the knowledge that Lizette was lost to them was the fact that she was ill, possibly in need, and that they were powerless to help her. Spurred on by this thought, Murdoch had all Paris searched again. Under Houlier's direction, detectives went over the city as with a fine-toothed comb, but no trace of Lizette was found. They were forced reluctantly to admit that she probably had left the city.

CHAPTER XXXIV

AT LAST.

Murdoch aged greatly in those weeks of searching. The gray began to show thickly among the brown hair that Lizette had used to stroke so softly. Kentucky's grief was bowing his broad shoulders, but when he saw how Murdoch was eating his heart out among these familiar scenes, he advised him to return to New York.

Murdoch was loath to go, but at length the calls of business became imperative. A month had gone by and he had to acknowledge that the chances of finding Lizette seemed more remote than ever. A couple of days before the time set for his departure, the two friends left the studio in the dusk of the gathering twilight to go to dinner. They were unusually solemn, for Murdoch's hopes had vanished.

"It is too late," he said to Kentucky, as they walked along. "We shall never see her again." And Kentucky, bowed down by the weight of the same conviction, had no encouragement to offer.

So absorbed were they in their own sad thoughts that they did not hear their names called shrilly from behind, and they had gone a block further before the puffing and blowing of some one running feebly attracted their attention. They turned to discover its cause and were astonished to see the old woman who sold coals hobbling after them as fast as her rheumatic old limbs could carry her.

She was so completely out of breath when she came up with them that she could not speak for several minutes. Her breathing was so labored and her face of such a purplish hue from the exertion of running that Murdoch feared she would fall in an apoplectic fit before she could reveal the cause of her excitement.

After sitting down on the curb for a few minutes and gasping for breath, while the two men anxiously bent over her, she managed to ejaculate—"Lizette!"

"What? Where? Have you seen her?" cried Murdoch and Kentucky, growing all at once as excited as herself. The old woman nodded.

"In—the—studio," she gasped. "She—came in—just—after you left. I saw her—as I sat—talking—with the concierge. She came in—the outer door. At first—I was frightened. I thought she was dead—that it was her spirit I saw. She was so white—so thin. But then she started to go up the stairs—toward the studio. She moved —oh, so slowly! She was very weak. But I knew it must be she. I did not speak to her. I ran after you to bring you back. I called you, but I could not make you hear. Go quickly—you will find her."

Murdoch waited only to learn for a certainty that Lizette was in the studio. Then he set off at a run, seizing Kentucky's hand and dragging the older man after him. At the street door they scarcely paused. Murdoch took the stairs in leaps of three steps and Kentucky's long legs came flying after him.

At the foot of the flight leading to the studio they moderated their pace and advanced more quietly. The door was ajar and they pulled it softly open and looked in.

Shadows filled the room, except for the glow from the stove and the dim light that came from the windows. But as they peered through the deepening twilight they could see the outline of a prostrate form stretched prone on the floor beneath the picture, "Parting."

It was Lizette!

Kentucky stretched out his arms with a gesture of infinite yearning. Then, with a sort of dry gasp, he drew back, and, seizing Murdoch by the shoulders, pushed him inside the room. The door closed between them.

Murdoch advanced quickly to where the prostrate figure lay. The brilliant afterglow of the sunset suddenly brightened the western windows with warm color and illuminated the painting above the bowed head. Murdoch kneeled in an ecstasy of emotion, and lifted the slight figure.

"Lizette, little one! At last I have found you!" he cried.

There was a sudden movement, a half-stifled gasp, then two arms were clasped tightly about his neck, and Lizette's head was buried upon his shoulder, and her sweet voice—oh, so weak and pitiful!—murmured:

"Pudgy! Oh, Pudgy!"

Murdoch carried her—how light a burden she was!—across to the sofa that stood along the wall. There he laid her tenderly down, being compelled to kneel himself because those encircling arms would not release their hold.

Presently, the two arms were slowly unclasped, and Lizette sank softly back upon the pillows. The eyes opened and gazed shyly at him with a half-frightened, wholly happy look. Then she suddenly buried her face in the pillow and murmured brokenly:

"Oh, Pudgy! I am so sorry to give to you the great bother."

But Murdoch stopped further speech with many kisses.

After a time he gently released his hand, which was clasped between Lizette's two thin white ones, and, going to the door, he called Kentucky. The old student was pacing back and forth upon the lower landing, his head bent, his hands behind his back. When he heard Murdoch's voice he came quickly up, and, without asking any questions, entered the studio. He bent over Lizette with streaming eyes, and, as he looked into her face, the cry of his heart that had been stifled for so many years found utterance.

"Oh, my daughter! Oh, my little one! God has given you back to me."

Lizette said not a word, but, with the contented smile of a tired, happy child still on her sweet, wan face, she reached up her arms, and, pulling Kentucky's great shaggy head down to her, she pressed a soft kiss on his forehead. There was no need of explanation. There was no surprise on Lizette's part. She had half guessed the truth in that churchyard in the south of France—the churchyard of the picture and the churchyard of the memories.

Murdoch was shocked at Lizette's appearance, and the

old woman was dispatched without more ado to bring a physician. But Kentucky was jubilant and confident.

"She's suffering from starved affections," he whispered to Murdoch. "The medicine she needs is the magic medicine of love. Don't worry, old man, but thank God that that damned banking business didn't keep you away this time."

Together they moved the sofa in front of the new stove—an old stove now—and there in the ruddy glow of the firelight they sat, one on each side of Lizette, each with one of her small hands clasped in his. Their hearts were too full for words; no words were needed. As they sat there in the warm firelight, Murdoch knew by the loving clasp of Lizette's hand on his big fingers that his love would not run away from him again.

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